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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 9 March 2011

Mercredi 9 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Good morning. Remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Jewish prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 8, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 160 today, the Occupational Health and Safety Act amendments. I want to just put a little context to this debate. We know the storyline, the narrative, that has been told by the Liberal government on this bill. The storyline that we're told, of course, is that these changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act are the result of the Tony Dean panel.

The Tony Dean panel was convened due to that tragic and unfortunate accident back at Christmas 2009, where four unregistered workers fell to their death at a scaffolding accident here in Toronto. That was the motivation for the Tony Dean report and these changes. That's what we're told. That's the story that we've been given.

Of course, to complete that story a little bit, those four individuals died that day as a result of a contractor not following the laws of this province at the time. Those employees were not registered anywhere. There was a complete breach of all the rules and the laws that were currently in place in the province.

So then we have this Tony Dean panel constructed. According to the minister, they've adopted all the recommendations of the Dean panel and the Dean panel came out with a consensus agreement for their recommendations. That is true; the Dean panel did come out with a consensus agreement on those recommendations.

The only problem is that this bill and the amendments in this bill do not correspond very well with the recommendations of the Dean panel. Probably the greatest dismissal of the Dean panel is that in this bill the government is going to remove and dismiss all the section 21 occupational health and safety association committees across this province.

The section 21 committees start off at industry or trade sector committees, and then at each region in each sector there are committees, and these roll up to provincial bodies. It's a very effective council. It represents all trades and all industry, across all regions of the province. It's also done completely by industry's own funding or by the volunteers within those industries.

All these section 21 committees are now going to be toast under this new Bill 160. All that industry expertise and regional expertise will be dismissed and no longer have any place in occupational health and safety in this province. Instead, we're going to have a hand-picked, predetermined, selected body called a prevention council. This prevention council is going to do the work of all these other section 21 committees. Who's going to be on it? Well, they will be picked by the Minister of Labour and an additional layer of political patronage will replace the industry's own voices for health and safety in this province.

Once the minister selects his patronage appointments for the prevention council, he's going to then have that council pick a chief prevention officer for the province who will have significant and arbitrary authority under this act.

So here we have all industries across the province—regional, provincial—being replaced by a patronage panel that is answerable only to the minister. Tony Dean didn't recommend that we do away with this industry-driven council—not at all. But that's what's in the bill.

I know the minister is not here today. Maybe he's listening; maybe he'll read the Hansard afterwards, or maybe the parliamentary assistant will respond as to why this legislation does away with all the section 21 committees—in contravention, actually, of what the Dean panel recommended.

We know that the storyline is of course, as I said earlier, about the tragic death at Christmas 2010, but is

that the real motivator behind this Bill 160? I can tell you and I can tell everybody in this House, and everybody who is watching or listening, that there is a very high level of dissatisfaction with the industry, with the Minister of Labour and with the Ministry of Labour. They've been very outspoken with the ministry about what the ministry is doing and not doing correctly.

0910

I'll share this little story with the members of this House. A couple of years ago, I was attending a home builders' meeting. At that home builders' meeting, there was an inspector from the Ministry of Labour also attending. That inspector got up and gave a presentation to the contractors who were there, and he told them—this is the Ministry of Labour inspector: "All you contractors here are my targets of opportunity." "Targets of opportunity" is how he referred to them. He went on to explain how the Ministry of Labour was also training the Chinese government on how to conduct compliance efforts in the construction industry. I find that absolutely amazing, that a civil servant, a public servant hired by the people of this province, views contractors as targets of opportunity. He was not there to assist or to facilitate or to help and to prevent workplace injuries; he was there to find a way to lay a charge. That inspector's name was Charles Taylor, if anybody wants to know, if anybody wants to check into it and see what Charles Taylor is doing today and how many fines he has been levying.

I think that gives a little bit of an illustration of what's really going on here. Industry has been very vocal to the Ministry of Labour about its shortcomings, and the ministry has been silent. So for the ministry to silence that opposition, "Let's get rid of the section 21 committees."

I'll share with this House another story on another workplace injury that happened in Renfrew county just a little while ago. The company that was charged was Gulick Forest Products. Gulick Forest Products was charged by the Ministry of Labour in a workplace injury at the sawmill. During the court case—which was eventually dismissed, after extensive cost to Gulick Forest Products—a series of very serious allegations arose about misconduct and failure of due process by the Ministry of Labour inspectors and also the Ministry of Labour lawyers in that case—very serious allegations. Once those allegations came to light, the ministry eventually dismissed and dropped the charges, but Gulick Forest Products was facing a quarter of a million dollars in fines on that injury. I know that first-hand, of course, because myself and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke are now facing defamation charges from those same lawyers at the Ministry of Labour for raising that subject. That's how the Ministry of Labour acts. The member from Renfrew and myself are facing $5.5 million in defamation suits because we spoke up in support of due process and stood up and championed the rights of a business in our area. That's what the Ministry of Labour has become: a very significant bully in the workplace. Industry is fearful of the Ministry of Labour, and the ministry is fearful of having bad press.

I'll tell this House as well that I went to the former Minister of Labour, the one just prior to the new minister, and I raised this with him. I raised this subject about Gulick Forest Products with the Minister of Labour before my defamation suit and asked him to inquire into the actions of the Ministry of Labour inspectors and the Ministry of Labour lawyers. After some conversation to explain the context, the Minister of Labour shrugged his shoulders and said, "The bureaucracy will do what the bureaucracy does." That was his response to my legitimate interest and concern about these serious allegations: "The bureaucracy will do what the bureaucracy does"—absolutely amazing, absolutely incredible, that a minister of the crown would take such a cavalier interest in his ministerial responsibilities. But of course he didn't intervene; now we face a defamation suit. But I'm sure a jury will find us not at fault for raising allegations.

Anyway, section 21 committees are now gone. We have this little facade being built up and created, and all these volunteer committees will be replaced with a political patronage council. I'm sure everybody here can hardly wait for that council to be completed. I'm sure we'll see that people such as Pat Dillon, the real Minister of Labour, the head of the Working Families Coalition, will be at its table collecting some additional funds from the people and the taxpayers of Ontario.

I also want to talk about—as a subset to this bill, there was a lot of talk about how we need to modify things, amend regulations to stem the underground economy, especially in construction. Of course, we know the underground economy thrives when the cost of doing business legitimately gets out of hand and where it can be more profitable to be below the radar, as they say. This bill does nothing to stem the underground economy. In fact, it does the exact opposite: It raises costs for legitimate businesses. We've seen it already with the increases in the WSIB premiums, increases in HST, increases in the regulatory burden, further increases here. So this bill actually pushes people further to the underground because the legitimate businesses just won't be able to comply with the expense of this. There's not a new dollar in here to assist industry at all; no. All the new training programs that will be required, the new safety manuals, whatever is going to be required by this prevention council will be shouldered strictly by the employer—not by the industry, not by the public; it will be shouldered by the individual contractor or employer, again pushing them further underground. That is something that the Tony Dean panel recommended be stemmed; they wanted this bill to have some teeth in it to stem the underground, and of course this bill does the exact opposite. So there are two parts, so far, of the Dean panel and the recommendations that have not been included in this bill.

0920

Then there's training. The Dean panel recommendations stressed and emphasized the need for greater training. Significant training was really such an important element of the Dean panel report, and in this bill we have

a single line item about training—one line, and that line says that the minister can set up training. There was widespread agreement in that panel on the need for training. Whatever that training's going to be, we know that it's going to be shouldered by the individual contractor, but it has one line.

The Dean panel also asked for a tracking system for that training, so that we would know who has been trained, so that they have some mobility and transportable recognition of their training. Well, there is absolutely nothing in this bill about tracking on that training. Now, I can understand why the Liberals might not want to get into electronic records for training, after we saw what they did with the electronic health records. They wasted $1 billion in that fiasco. And now we have an agreement, a consensus report, saying that they need to get into tracking on workplace safety—not a mention in the bill whatsoever, not one mention of that electronic record-keeping, and no real mention of training, other than that the minister can set up training.

This bill also leaves most of its thrust unknown to everybody, because everything is left to the regulatory process. We all know that when the ministry actually gets around to creating these regulations, they never come back before the House for scrutiny. So we don't really know what we're getting with Bill 160, in that the details are not known here.

One of the big things in the Dean panel report: They said these changes could be cost-neutral. But there's so little of substance in here. We know that the training is going to be shouldered by the individuals. We don't know what the minister may do in that regard. We know that there will not be that electronic tracking, and we know that these regulations are going to add additional costs to our employers to help push them to the underground, exactly in contravention and contradiction to what the Dean panel's recommendations were for or about.

Those are a couple of things. I'd like to see the parliamentary assistant today—he's here in the House—maybe respond to some of those contradictions between the legislation and the recommendations. I really would be encouraged to see how the parliamentary assistant responds. But we do know that there's much at fault in workplace safety right now. Much of it rests at the feet of the Ministry of Labour, and under this new legislation they are going to assume greater authority for workplace safety, so they say, and take it out of the hands of industry. So we're going to have a number of political appointments, a number of bureaucrats, lawyers and civil servants sitting around deciding what's safe and what isn't safe in the workplace—people who have never been on a job site; people who, if they saw a pair of work boots, would trip over them. But these are the people who are going to be creating the training and the regulations and the edicts about workplace safety, and they have never experienced any of it.

I can tell you, Minister, and members opposite, that in my days on the job site as an electrician, I saw some pretty stupid regulations that were meant to protect me from myself. If I followed them all, I probably wouldn't be standing here today. I disregarded a number of them because they were just absolutely, incredibly stupid, but those were the edicts of Ministry of Labour inspectors who, like I said, wouldn't know a pair of work boots if they saw them.

I would like the minister to respond to those components. I would like him to also respond why it is that industry can't take care of itself. All these interested parties—knowledgeable, experienced people—are no longer important in the process. I also want the minister to explain—Christmas 2009, this rogue contractor broke all the rules of the day, every rule, which led to the death of four people. How is this going to prevent another rogue contractor? He'll have difficulty answering that one because, of course, it won't; it won't do anything at all.

Nothing in this bill leads to a more respectful relationship, but also nothing in this bill safeguards the public interest from the new prevention council or this chief prevention officer. They have such arbitrary and complete authority under this bill. I know what I've experienced with the Ministry of Labour lawyers—their reckless attitude and reckless pursuit of a prosecution. How is that going to be diminished when we give them more authority, more unaccountable authority, more authority that is not really going to be looked at by anybody other than maybe Pat Dillon at the Working Families Coalition, if he gets another plum patronage job?

I think what we can see here, and what we've seen with the Liberals for the last number of years, is Pat Dillon and the Working Families Coalition being the true policymakers of the Liberal Party. There's this shadow cabinet over there. Many people may not see it, but it has its hand to play—Pat Dillon and the Working Families—on this piece of legislation.

We also saw it with Monte Hummel and the Far North Act. When the Premier was asked about the Far North Act, really the only person who was consulted on that one was Monte Hummel from the World Wildlife Fund.

We also see it with the environmental legislation. When the Minister of the Environment really wants to get input from stakeholders, he goes to Rick Smith at Environmental Defence.

In labour, when the government wants to get input, they create a little panel called the Dean panel, but really, who's driving the ship? Pat Dillon is driving that ship.

0930

So let's see if we get some answers. Let's see if we get some answers about these section 21 committees from the parliamentary assistant. I'm not even sure if he's taking notes or if he's awake, but I want him to explain to the people of this province why he is bringing forward legislation that actually contravenes the recommendations of the Dean panel report—actually contravenes the recommendations. Why has he left so much off the table, except greater control and greater arbitrary authority and more political patronage appointments? I know they

didn't talk about that when the minister did his leadoff the other day. There was no mention of those things. All he spoke about was how wonderful the report was and how he had adopted all the recommendations. Well, he didn't adopt the recommendations, and he actually contravenes very important elements of that Dean panel report. Nowhere in that panel report does it say we should have more political patronage and less industry representation—nowhere; not at all. But that's what workplace health and safety is going to get: more political patronage, less industry involvement, and of course nothing, nothing in this bill—oh, here's another one. Nothing in this bill is going to fix, of course, the problems at WSIB, and I'll tell you, as labour critic, that is a significant number of requests I get every week, every day, from people who are dealing with WSIB, and it's not a pleasant experience for those people.

But let me tell you this: All the people who are working at WSIB on the prevention side are no longer going to be having a job, according to this piece of legislation. There are over 100 people on prevention at WSIB. What's going to happen to them? I wonder, because prevention moves over to the Ministry of Labour now completely, and is no longer a part of WSIB—I can only think of what happened when the Liberals brought in the HST. Of course, they were going to save money with the HST, right? They were going to save us all money. They had 1,200 PST auditors at the time, retail sales tax auditors. What did they do? They said that they fired them, that they had to pay them severance, but they never missed a day; they were hired by the federal government the same moment they were fired, but at a huge cost in severances to the taxpayers.

So I'm just wondering if the parliamentary assistant will explain that to us: Are these hundreds of people in prevention at WSIB going to get fired, collect a big, handsome severance package and then be rehired at the same moment by the Ministry of Labour, or are they going to stay at WSIB in some other role and you're just going to hire more people? Let's have some explanations from the ministry on that. What are they going to do with that and how is that going to save the people of Ontario money? Or is it just more smoke and mirrors like the HST?

I'd like to put on the record that those are questions to the minister and to his ministry. The people of Ontario want to have them answered. The people in industry want to have some answers, and not these smoke-and-mirrors answers—real, legitimate answers. Don't give us this shrug of the shoulders and say, "Well, the bureaucracy does what the bureaucracy does." We've already had that from the previous minister. Let's have a minister and a ministry that stands up. Be honest with the people of Ontario. Be honest with industry. When we get that, then we can actually look at the regulations in the proper light, if and when they ever come back here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Chair, we are sharing time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I didn't hear that at the outset.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, he said he's splitting his time with me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, the two of you stood up and kind of jostled around, and I called for further debate. But if I have the consent of the House—do we have consent to allow splitting of the time? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you. Often early in the morning we're not fully paying attention to things—on my part, I'm saying—and perhaps Hansard will tell a different story.

I first want to start by thanking our critic in Tim Hudak's opposition party, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I think he did really conceptualize our concerns. I'm privileged, because I do have a copy—in the short time I have—of the expert panel, the Dean report, with me. As you can see, I have thumbed through it carefully in a couple of parts, which I will record, because I think our critic remains fundamentally concerned about whether or not this bill does as it purports to do.

You know, even in the simplest way, when I got the report—this bill was only introduced on March 3, and the report was issued on December 10, so they are kind of putting a bit of a rush on this, I gather. It's an election year; potentially, it's trying to satisfy some of the demands of labour. I understand that. But let's keep the fundamental thing in focus here. Our leader, Tim Hudak, is concerned about whether Premier McGuinty is focused on the results each day or the election in the next few days, but we're more focused on the rights and responsibility of workers and the protection of workers. The expert panel was asked, as a result of some controversial accidents, mostly in the construction-related industry—and actually, it's even more fundamentally important than that, because there's a huge issue, which I'll go through here in the few minutes I have.

Pardon me. I might ask for a couple of glasses of water, if I could, please. Thank you. Excuse me.

The bill is An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters. Minister Sousa did a great job introducing it—a new minister. He has an excellent voice, anyway; it sounds like a radio voice. He read the notes very, very clearly, and was well understood.

If I read the preamble, the explanation notes in the bill—it's not really that large a bill, technically. It's 17 pages, so really it's about eight pages long, because it's printed in both official languages—as it should be. But if I look at it, at first blush I'd say that I'm amazed at how much power it's giving to the minister, or they're taking back.

The explanation says, "Section 4.1, which specifies the minister's responsibility for the administration of the act and sets out some of the minister's powers and duties in administering the act, is added to part II of the act." It

goes on to say, "The act is amended to allow the minister"—he wouldn't know a pair of work boots from grass; that's what the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington said— "to establish standards for training programs and to approve programs that meet the standards. The minister may also establish standards that a person must meet in order to become" approved.

It goes on. It says: "Section 6 of the act is amended to authorize a director to establish policies respecting the interpretation, administration....

"Section 7.6, which allows the minister to establish training and other requirements that a member of a joint health and safety"—and,

"Section 8 ... is amended to require a constructor or employer to ensure that health and safety representatives receive training...." That's very appropriate. I think it's much like it is today.

0940

"Section 9 of the act is amended to allow either co-chair of a joint health and safety committee to make written recommendations...."

This is new here: "The bill adds part II.1 (prevention council, chief prevention officer and designated entities) to the act." It "requires the minister to establish a prevention council responsible for providing advice to the minister...." That's a delegated authority.

This would be very, very important. It's sort of like a LHIN, the local health integration network. The LHINs are sort of designated authorities that really make decisions for the minister, but you can't get to the minister. The minister says, "I can't interfere with the LHINs," but she appoints the LHINs. It's the same thing here. It's a shield so that you can't get to the minister. It sounds cynical. In fact, we'll have to keep an eye on that.

If I look in detail at just a couple of those sections—let's look into the bill, into the deeper marrow of the bill itself. Under "designated entities," it says, "designation by the minister." This is what the preamble said and this is what it actually does:

"22.4(1) The minister may designate an entity as a safe workplace association or as a medical clinic or training centre specializing in occupational health and safety matters if the entity meets the standards....

"(2) The minister may establish standards...." It goes on like that. What this bill does is it generally sets up a framework for allowing the minister to designate and set up certain things.

No one here would expect or accept that the minister would make things less safe, like the structure that fell down before Christmas where people were killed. It was reported somehow that perhaps these were—as our critic, Mr. Hillier, said—rogues, and you can't regulate those people; well, they could be fined.

There were orders and powers within the existing law, and they could have prosecuted those unscrupulous contractors who were using people who perhaps weren't trained, scaffolding that wasn't up to the standard—that already exists. So what's in this? There's really not a lot in it, technically.

I looked further into the Dean report, as I mentioned, to find out if they're actually doing some of the recommendations. Surprise, surprise; they're not. This is a fairly comprehensive report issued on December 10. It was sent to the then minister—quite a good fellow as well; I think he's running federally. Peter Fonseca: a nice young guy. I hope he enjoys his time there in opposition. He'll probably be involved in the leadership because Michael Ignatieff will be thrown under the bus right after the election, probably.

This expert panel to conduct a review of occupational health submitted the following observations and recommendations. One would think, in the executive summary—some people are chatting here, so it's hard for me to focus on what needs to be said.

In the brief time: "A Focus on Workplaces and the Highest Value Opportunities for Change"—I really think that former Deputy Minister Tony Dean meant what he said, and he's trying to establish some responsibility and commitment to workers who may be injured in the workplace.

"The panel's review focused on areas of workplace health ... that needed improvement. To ensure that there is real benefit to workplaces, the workplace parties must be actively engaged in"—well, I would say that there's not a lot in the bill that actually addresses that specifically. He's got the minister appointing these various people, who, as said earlier, were going to be—let's be honest, pending the election—political appointments.

Everybody is sort of shaking their heads; I see that. But I want to see who exactly they are appointing, so I looked up another place. This is the 2009 WSIB annual report. How are they doing? How is that board doing?

I should make it clear, too, that I did work at General Motors for 31 years. Part of that time was in personnel. My undergraduate degree is in labour economics from the University of Toronto. I'm very genuinely interested in this and I know how important it is to have rules in the workplace for both sides, supervision as well as the employees.

I looked at this annual report, and the first thing I thought was, "Well, there's a nice picture. Who's the chair of that?" The chair is Steve Mahoney, who's a former Liberal member of this House and a friend of Premier McGuinty. I've met him several times. I think the auditor had a few things to say about Mr. Mahoney. We'll have to look that up too. Well, I have, and it has been recorded here. That's just one example. I don't impugn him personally but I think he made a few errors, errors in his ways. But you don't have to take—it has been brought up in here by the auditor, not me. This is not something that I've made up.

I looked around, though, and I think one should pursue this further, so I looked at the whole board. Let's go over that for a bit. Now, who's on the board? Well, David Marshall is the president and CEO, January 24; Larry Barnett, health and safety. Here's one right here: Patrick Dillon. Wait a minute. I thought—well, I'm only going from what the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox

and Addington, Mr. Hillier, said. He said that Pat Dillon was the head of Working Families, the coalition against anybody but the Liberals, really, and that's a sad state. I know Mr. Dillon as well; I've known him for quite a while, actually since 1996 or 1997, when we tried to change the apprenticeship ratio issue and Mr. Dillon was very upset. In fact, we were in the middle of hearings in Sudbury when I first met him. He appeared before the committee at that time, saying, "No, no, you can't do this." Well, it still exists. In fact, Mr. Hillier said that he's the adviser to the minister. He is. And he's the head of the Working Families Coalition, which is a very overt political interventionist group. I wouldn't use the word "terrorist"; it would be a bit inflammatory. But actually, it does appear to me that that's close.

The other part, too—I'm not going to impugn all these people, but I did look on there. I looked further. In fairness, this is not just a tertiary glance; this is an assessment of how good a job or poor a job Peter Fonseca and the current minister, Charles Sousa, are doing. I can't blame it all on them. You have to look at the Premier, the consistent leader since 2003. Well, not consistent, but certainly the leader. I would say, let's look at this. How's the 10-year summary? It's a good place to start, usually. This is the 10-year summary in the annual report. Look it up. It's online. It's all available. It's public information. It tells you an audited version of the truth: not edited, but audited—pretty similar words. In 2000—let's go back to the time of Premier Harris. In 2000, the liability at that time was $5.6 billion. Liability is the unfunded of what is liability for the future, injured workers who have received awards. How are they doing on that file? Well, I happen to be looking at it here. What is the unfunded liability today? It has doubled. It's $11.7 billion. They haven't done very well on that.

Another thing which workers should be frightened about, and I expect the NDP will discuss this: Let's look at the pertinent statistics. On, by and large, the average premium—now, you've got to understand what WSIB is. I'm going to take one moment and give you kind of a five-minute summary on it. WSIB is a legislative framework that allows the government to protect workers—allows. It sets up a legal framework to pay for injuries in the workplace. Now, let's follow it carefully; it's WSIB, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

0950

What are injuries? Fall off ladder, break leg—that's an injury, a broken leg injury. I thought we had a health care system that covered that. We do. But this is insurance. Wait a minute; insurance is private. They're investing in the market, playing various derivative funds and all that. I thought our health care system was public. Wait a minute here; it's not. This is insurance. It's health care—go to hospital, file the injury report, there's a claim made against WSIB and the WSIB pays through an insurance fund for the broken leg. Surprise. I bet there aren't five people in this House who know how it works, and I'm serious. I'm not pointing to any particular names.

Where does the money come from—this liability, or lack of money? Two things: The rate of increase in injured workers is a measurement of how safe our workplace is, or is it? There are areas where it's more dangerous than others. A roofer, for example, is more dangerous than perhaps a hairdresser so they have higher rates of insurance, the premiums.

What are the premiums? First of all, there's not one nickel of provincial tax money in the WSIB—not one nickel. If you want to cover that liability, it's a tax on payroll. I'm not saying that—it's how the legislation works. The framework I talked to you about is—WSIB is funded by the employers. The employers buy coverage, called a premium, just like you do if it's car insurance, where you have a premium, or if it's home insurance or whatever else—insurance, insurance, insurance. They buy insurance against injuries. That insurance is a tax on payroll, basically.

Yesterday in the House the Minister of Agriculture—I couldn't believe it. She either doesn't know—and I won't say more than that. But she said, "You know, we've added farm workers to the WSIB." Do you know what? They've increased the premium on farm labour by 17% this year alone. I wish people would pay more attention to what actually goes on here. They've added them. Why? Why have they added them, would you think? Because there are fewer industrial workers. Remember, insurance is like a pyramid scheme: You've got to have more people paying than collecting. So they're adding groups that previously weren't covered to make the insurance scheme work. I told you, remember, that they've doubled the debt from $5 billion to $11 billion. That means workers somewhere down the line aren't covered unless we get a lot more people paying into it. The other thing is, you cut people off or you increase the rates of insurance. That's how it works.

I'm going to tell you here in this report—look it up online or call me; I'll send it to you. Unfunded liability in 2009 had gone from $5 billion to almost $12 billion, and the premiums have gone up as well. Not only that; the number of workers, the equivalent of full-time workers, has actually gone down. In other words, they've actually reduced the number of people who are entitled. If they had allowed the normal trend line to continue of not cutting people off—in my office, I hear about people being cut off or hassled. So they're cutting people off; that cuts down their liability, because they're no longer entitled to future entitlements.

There are two or three different types of awards you can get. You can get a FEL award, which is a future economic loss award, or a NEL award, non-economic loss, which is pain and suffering, for people that do fall off the ladder and break their leg, but they also hurt their back so they can't really work anymore. Some of them are assigned a pension, a partial pension, cash awards—there are different methods of payout here.

I've looked at the framework of legislation from Tony Dean's perspective, and I don't think they're doing what they said. At least, I will need a further briefing on the bill to know.

The second thing: I think the WSIB itself is in serious trouble, absolutely critical trouble. Why? Because a good

number of workers in the public aren't covered. Some work groups are covered under federal legislation. The banking industry is one case in point.

Now, I have become a little animated on this because I do want to stand up for the injured worker; I really do, having worked in an industrial workplace for 31 years, actually, at General Motors.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't hold back, John. Let it all out.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm going to let it all out.

Here's the deal. What bothers me: We all know that large companies now are funded—it's not some rich Mr. General Motors or Mr. Stelco; these companies are owned by shareholders, and those shareholders are basically pensioners. Pension funds are probably the biggest pools of capital, and those pension funds are to eventually generate revenue from this pool of money to pay off dividends, which are called annuities or whatever they're called; they're a form of a pension. It could be in several forms. It could be a LIF, a life income fund, or it could be an annuity.

The whole point here is, there are 300,000 people who have lost jobs in manufacturing, and they're not coming back. All this talk about green jobs is absolute baloney. If you're looking at what's going on in Europe, in Germany—very large, successful, technical industry throwing the green energy and the FIT tariff overboard. France, Germany—Japan is now faltering on it as well. Their plan here, green energy, is another serious miscalculation, a poor plan, for industry.

They say, "Well, green energy is so important." Yes, but actually, a report came out last week that shows that green energy loses jobs. Why? Because the cost of energy in the overall cost of production—

Mr. Phil McNeely: Bring back coal.

Mr. John O'Toole: They don't understand. They're complaining—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm sure the member for Durham is going to get back to the bill that's on the table.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm trying to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm sure you are.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm going to. What I'm trying to do is bring it back to: What are the jobs of the future? I feel so saddened, actually. What are the jobs of the future for our young children graduating from high school? Not everybody can become a doctor or a lawyer or, heaven forbid, a politician. Some of them actually have to have jobs in Stelco, General Motors, Chrysler and in mining and forestry.

There are 120,000 people in the forestry industry out of work. The member from Nickel Belt yesterday read a litany of people who have lost their jobs in northern Ontario. We've seen the impact of high-cost energy. Now, in the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario, they're going to harvest the metals out of the ground and process them in Quebec because the energy is cheaper. You don't think it's related?

Let's go back to the pension fund discussion. How are they going to pay off that $11 billion? It's a tax on payroll, is what it is. That's what they're going to do: Right after the election, there's going to be another tax. It's going to be a tax on jobs. And then what happens? If they don't make money, the pension plans—that's all our futures, or the 30% of the population that actually has a pension. The pensions won't make money, and I'm telling you, this is what's happening now. That's why every pension—and you know this, too; you're the innovation minister. What are the jobs of the future? In your two-minute response, you can tell me what the jobs of the future are; I mean, in Canada. If you think they're at Research in Motion, Research in Motion has about three years left. If they're not bought out by Microsoft, it's finished. Apple has already taken over—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, they'll buy out the patent—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham: If you can tie all this into the occupational safety act, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's actually about my concern for the jobs so that this deficit can be paid off.

In fairness, the former deputy minister, and I think he might still be the deputy minister, Tony Dean—I've met him several times over 15 years. In his report, I honestly believe he was asking the minister to step in and solve some of these structural problems in the WSIB. I hope Mr. Sousa is watching this morning, because I think you should be trying to fix this system and protect workers. I'm giving you the red light, the signal. This thing is in chaos. You have doubled the debt, you've got fewer people collecting and being entitled, and the only way you can fix it is to raise the money. How? Raise the insurance premium or reduce coverage—and that, to me, is a dilemma that stretches right across of most of Premier McGuinty's plans.

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You were in the insurance business, or I think on that side at one time, Mr. Speaker. How's auto insurance? They've allowed more tort in auto insurance, which means that if you want to get paid for your injury, get a lawyer. That's what they did. They didn't reduce your premiums; they reduced your entitlements, and the same thing is going to happen here. They've got these so-called—I think they're called the CPO, the chief prevention officer, who they're going to blame for the things that aren't working instead of blaming Premier McGuinty.

I can only say that our critic, Mr. Hillier, has brought up a few points—and I'll keep it a little simpler, in fairness, in the few minutes I have left. I may ask for more time, because it doesn't appear that anybody else wants to say anything.

The bill does nothing to prevent employers from entering the black market and would, in fact, drive employers to the black market by creating more uncertainty and bureaucracy. If you increase the premiums, more of these home renovation people go underground; they don't pay at all.

The bill creates yet another bureaucracy, and I think the head of that will be Pat Dillon. This fellow—nice person; this isn't a personal thing—is on the wrong track. He's on the wrong track, this guy. Working Families? Get over it.

The bill contains numerous new obligations and regulations for industry. "Blame industry" is what it's about. As with the other recent Liberal bills, a substantial portion of the legislation is left to regulation, which means we really don't know substantively what they are going to do.

So I call on the Minister of Labour to have public hearings. Let's air the facts on the status of WSIB. The organization, the multi-billion-dollar organization, has been somewhat tainted by some of the decisions made recently, as well as Mr. Dean's report. Let's see that if there are 12 recommendations, then there are 12 recommendations being followed up in the report, not some kind of loosey-goosey framework that gives the minister the powers he needs and doesn't really directly implicate what I would call ensuring safety for workers in the workplace. That's all Tim Hudak has asked us to ask for: demand hearings and look at some of the things that this bill exposes—both the employer, who's going to get nailed paying it, and the employee, who's going to perhaps be denied benefits.

These are troubling outcomes for legislation here in this last part before the budget. If there are any teeth in this at all, we'll see something in the budget here in March, and I'm going to be looking for it. If there's nothing in here to help the WSIB get out of the ditch, then we know the future is not very bright under Premier McGuinty.

That's how I leave it to you today: If you want to know the future, look to the past. The past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour. They have pretty well ruined every file they've touched. They have—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now they're laughing. They've had 10 years. They've doubled the debt, they've doubled the taxes and things are no better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened intently to the member from Durham. He's always entertaining, and interestingly is backed up by Dave Killham, the executive director of the Workers Health and Safety Centre, who has sent out a memo regarding this bill that is absolutely opposed to it. It basically says directly that it "could eliminate the independence of the Workers Health and Safety Centre and place it under the" sole control "of Queen's Park."

This is a very frightening move. This has nothing to do with the Dean report and their recommendations, and that's very, very clear. This has nothing to do with that. This has to do with putting the minister in charge of what should be controlled by the workers in their places of work and what already has a framework that, although not working seamlessly—nothing does—certainly is better than putting it under the control of a Liberal minister.

I believe that the member from Durham is also correct. This is a government in decline; the polls show that. So, desperately, they're trying to make appointments. Desperately, they're trying to cling on to some degree of power in the bureaucracy by making sure that Liberals are in these places. The member from Durham went through that point by point, line item by line item, and unfortunately, he's correct.

When you have the executive director of the Workers Health and Safety Centre coming out in opposition to the bill, when you realize that this would take away control from workers in their places of work and give it to the government, you should be very, very concerned, particularly when this is a government that just took away the right to strike from transit workers.

This is not a government that is doing anything to support workers' rights or union rights. This is a government that is clearly in direct opposition to those very rights. This government has taken away the core right, the right to strike, from the transit workers, and now we're going to put them in charge of workers' health and safety? I don't think so. I think it's actually quite frightening; very frightening, in fact. And they should be very much aware that that kind of framework, of course, is possibly going to be taken over by another government, which makes it even more frightening.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I only have two minutes to briefly respond to the comments that were made by today's presenters, both the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and the member from Durham. I thank them for their comments.

The expert advisory panel on occupational health and safety prepared a report, dated December 2010, with 46 recommendations. Our legislation is a direct response to those recommendations.

I think the most important point is that we want to integrate the system so that if there is a problem in the future, we'll be able to handle it and the ministry will be directly responsible for things that happen in the future.

We're committed to these recommendations and we're going to implement all of them. It's more than the other parties have done in the past or would do if they had the opportunity to deal with this issue in front of us today. Let's remember: This is a good thing. It's something about health and safety, and it's good for our workers.

I don't have much time, but just focusing on section 50 of this act, the chief prevention officer is allowed to protect vulnerable workers, and vulnerable workers have new protections put in place, which I think the member who spoke earlier should look at. I also want to point out that the new chief prevention officer can better coordinate the prevention system.

We're creating a new prevention council, with representatives from labour, employers and safety experts, to advise the chief prevention officer and the minister. We're removing the powers from bureaucracy and placing them directly with the minister.

We're also enabling the Minister of Labour to set new training standards, revamp the reprisal process and de-

velop codes or practice that help business with compliance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: In the time I have, I want to concentrate a few remarks in the area of the special concerns that small business have.

The minister made reference to the fact that one of the things that came out of the process that brought us to the creation of the bill was the fact that there was a subcommittee struck to report on the special concerns of small business.

The recommendations they provided to the expert panel are three basic ones. The first is the issue of the recognition that there needs to be some vehicle that would represent the needs and interests of employers and workers in small business. I think that this particular part requires a great deal of effort on the part of the government because of the fact that, historically, and certainly in the recent past, we've seen that small business has been left out of the equation.

It comes down to some very practical things. Many of these people we're talking about under that umbrella are businesses with fewer than five employees. There is no HR department. There is nobody who is assigned to those kinds of things.

So when the second recommendation they make is for the creation of focused and integrated programs, I would remind the government that these are individuals, in many cases, and certainly very small businesses, and they need something more than the issue of compliance: They need assistance. This bill must address those issues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The minister—the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Could have been a minister. Thank you, Speaker.

Just a couple of comments. The bill does indeed give a lot more power to the minister than ever before. In some cases this is a good thing, is an argument I make. Because we have direct connection to the minister, we're able to question him or her on a regular basis, and that could give us the more accountability that we're looking for.

It may not always be the case. Part of the problem around this is what the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington alluded to, and the member from Durham as well, and that is that as we move the control to the minister, the member from Lanark and all the other places said that this is absolutely bad and wrong because it gives them the power to appoint people, and to appoint who? In his mind, Liberals, who are not nice, not good, and that would be a problem because it would certainly reflect the interests of labour and not so much the contractor. I'm not sure the Liberals would do that, because the Liberals are just as close to the contractors as the Liberals.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So my sense is that they would be sure to have that balance. That's my sense. But I worry about that. I worry about not having an independent prevention council that is independent of any government, whoever is there. I worry as much about this as the member from Parkdale–High Park, who said we might be frightened of Liberal centralized control; imagine what it would be like if you had a hostile government who would not be too friendly to injured workers and workers in general. Then we're stuck with a government that has centralized control and would be willing to hurt injured workers and workers in general. That frightens me even more.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do want to reply to all of the members. Parkdale–High Park: She was quite insightful and on the money, I think. Scarborough Southwest, the parliamentary assistant: I appreciate him being here and taking the time. York–Simcoe, of course, is a very strong voice for small business, and Trinity–Spadina, a very strong voice for Ontario.

Here is the real issue, though: I think that the parliamentary assistant—in fact, the member from Trinity–Spadina has it right. The devil here is in the detail, and it's a matter of trust. When public figures break trust, the public then becomes cynical and less certain and vacillates and is troubled. I think, quite honestly, with all due respect, that's how I feel about Premier McGuinty just now. I've watched, and he has become less certain of our future. This is troubling, as a leader, for us to feel that way.

This bill here really sets up a framework. It's a regulatory framework. There are 46 recommendations; we know that. Now, if you look at them, they all say, "set up this chief prevention officer." Almost all of them start with that. Well, we'll have to see who the appointments are. That's what the member from Trinity–Spadina—I would say we need to have jobs in the province. We need to work with the industry and we need to protect the workers in that industry. I'm not sure—I told you where we've come with the WSIB; it is over the cliff. This bill doesn't fix it. It doesn't put the brakes on some of the things that are going on there now. That's troubling. This bill itself: I hope the minister will go to hearings and see if it tests out, if it road-tests, as has been talked about. We'll be paying close attention because, you know, we're the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 8, this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're delighted that page Julian Dusko-Bernyck has his aunt Christina Root and cousin Claudia Root observing question period today.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to introduce, in the members' gallery, Liang Chen from the University of Toronto, our candidate in Scarborough–Agincourt. She's joined by her husband, Louis Florence, from the University of Toronto as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): On behalf of the member from Etobicoke North and page Ira Sharma, I would like to introduce Nishtha Sharma, Rakesh Sharma and Ishani Sharma, who are in the members' gallery. Welcome.

On behalf of the MPP for Richmond Hill, I would like to introduce Kim Gavine, executive director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, tonight is your annual Liberal Party dinner in Toronto. We suspect you'll do what you always do and leak contents of the upcoming provincial budget to Liberal insiders first, instead of the Legislative Assembly or the general public. The finance minister has received the Ontario PC caucus pre-budget submission—outstanding work by our finance critic, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka—where the PC Party calls for you to finally give some relief and respect to Ontario families who pay the bills.

Minister, as you recall, last year your sneaky eco tax was nowhere to be found in your budget. You tried to slip it in on Canada Day, when families weren't looking. I ask the Acting Premier: Will you at least show some respect for Ontario families this year and just be up front? What sneaky tax hike do you have up your sleeve for 2011?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition is implying—and I understand he said today—that he thinks there will be tax increases in the budget. I think that what he has forgotten to tell people is that we have made, consistently, tax decreases for the families of Ontario: $12 billion over three years in tax cuts and other tax relief for Ontario families. Some 93% of Ontario families will get a permanent tax cut as a result of our tax reform package, and 90,000 people will no longer pay personal income tax because of our tax reforms.

The member opposite seems to be making a comment on record. I would say, based on his record, people can expect nothing but cuts to service from that member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: So we have the Liberals now saying that they've delivered tax cuts for families. You tell us that smart meters are saving families money. I'm looking for Dalton McGuinty confirming that the Leafs are going to win the cup in 2011.

Come on, Minister. Last year, you tried to sneak in the eco tax. You didn't have the courage to actually put it in your budget. Liberal members opposite are practically salivating at their desks with ideas for new tax grabs on the backs of families. You have Liberal MPPs calling for a new school board tax and a water tax. You have members calling for a carbon tax. Please tell us: Which one will it be, or are you going to try to keep it secret until after the next election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I look forward to introducing a budget later this month that will build on the Ontario child benefit to cut taxes for working Ontarians by $1.2 billion. I look forward to introducing a budget that will build on our tax cut for small businesses—18%, the largest cut to small business in history. I look forward to building on our record of lowering taxes for Ontarians of modest means—19% in the 2009 budget. But most importantly, I look forward to building on our record of education and health care, to build a better education system.

What all Ontarians want to know is: What will that leader and his party do? They are going to shut down full-day learning. They will close hospitals and lay off nurses. We're not going back there. The people of Ontario want a vision of leadership, and that's what Dalton McGuinty and his government are providing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm waiting for him to mention the plague of locusts as well. That's probably next in the Liberal spin.

You know what the facts are, Minister? You always say you're not going to increase taxes, and then Dalton McGuinty's government brings in a tax increase of some kind.

Let's look at what your members are saying. Your Minister of Research and Innovation—how do I put this politely?—who is infinitely quotable, says, "It is time for all of us to start to get comfortable with two words: carbon tax"; your Minister of Consumer Services said, "Certainly a carbon tax is something to look at...."; and the chair of your climate change advisory committee said that he's "a huge advocate of a carbon tax."

Don't you understand, Minister? Families actually need relief from the constant McGuinty tax hikes. Why are you talking so much about increasing taxes on Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I welcomed the support of Jim Flaherty and John Baird when we cut family taxes. They get it; they understand it.

That member and his party are talking about something that hasn't happened. I want to talk about what has happened. They closed 39 hospitals on their watch. It wasn't a plague of locusts; it was a plague that nearly undermined our public health care system. Twenty-six million student days of education were lost in this province because of their slash-and-burn approach at a time when the world economy was growing. We have laid out a plan to protect public education, build on our successes in public health and lower taxes for all Ontarians.

The one thing we haven't heard from them is a plan. Why? Because they don't want Ontarians to know that they are going back to slash and burn, closing hospitals, closing schools and harming the environment. Ontario will reject that.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier. He did use "plague of locusts." I could have won the pool on that one. We'll wait for the cancellation of Christmas next.

Minister, let me tell you something. When your leader, Premier McGuinty, isn't busy taxing, he's busy opening the gates to runaway spending and Liberal waste. While budget season seems to be the only time that he ever actually talks about restraint, his talk is cheap.

Your last budget was a dramatic failure. You said you were going to freeze public sector wages, but your plan has gone badly off the rails with increases that are simply out of touch with the abilities of families to pay the bills. Since your public sector wage freeze has become such a disaster, how can we believe any promise you make in your budget about fiscal constraint?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario has the lowest collective agreement settlement rates—lower than the private sector, lower than municipalities and, yes, lower than the federal government right now, and we will be speaking more about that.

What Ontarians want to know is: When you eliminate the health premium and cut $3 billion from health care, how are you going to continue to operate hospitals?

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The Leader of the Opposition wants to cut another $3 billion from taxes. That means they will close full-day learning. Make no mistake; they are not committed to that by any stretch of the imagination.

There's a lot of bluster from over there, a lot of information that doesn't meet the test of accuracy, but one thing is absent: a plan—because they don't want Ontarians to know that they're going to close hospitals, lay off nurses, close schools and undo the great strides this province has made over the last seven years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the minister knows the reality that Ontario families have, sadly, learned the hard way, and that's that Premier McGuinty is simply hardwired to increase taxes and waste taxpayers' money on bigger and bloated bureaucracies.

Premier McGuinty trying to convince us that he's got his spending habit under control is like Charlie Sheen trying to convince us that he has finally kicked his drug habit. I'm more likely to bet on Charlie Sheen than Dalton McGuinty to cut taxes in the province of Ontario.

Last spring, Minister, you made a big show about trying to get the public spending under control. You had a phony wage freeze that has gone badly off the rails.

I ask you: Will you follow the Ontario PC recommendation to fix the broken arbitration system and ensure that at the end of the day Ontario families can actually pay the bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As somebody who ran the largest addictions program in Ontario for eight years, I think it's deplorable that the Leader of the Opposition would stoop to questions about the people in this province who are fighting addictions every day. It's absolutely scandalous.

Let's talk about that. So now he's going to close addictions programs. Later today, we're going to debate mental health issues—an important debate, but that member wants to make fun of people with addictions instead of focusing on the issues.

Instead of making fun of people with addictions, instead of undermining people who are working hard to achieve sobriety and become contributing members of society, tell us what you're going to do. Put it on the table. Mike Harris had the courage to do that. Mike Harris laid it out a year and a half early. And do you know what he did? He closed hospitals. He closed schools. He compared nurses to hula hoops. The people of Ontario see through that—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We're just going to take a minute to get our breath.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: What a bunch of silly nonsense coming from the finance minister, who has no plan to get spending under control and has up his sleeve another underhanded tax grab to take more money out of the pockets of Ontario families.

You'll remember last time, Minister; you secretly had in your 2010 budget a plan to cancel the mandatory review of these bloated health bureaucracies called LHINs. Since that time, the Ombudsman revealed that your LHINs held secret, illegal meetings where they talked about closing ERs, like in Fort Erie and Port Colborne. The number of executives on your LHIN sunshine list continues to grow. The LHIN in your own hometown wanted to spend $10,000 of health money to bring Disney's magical kingdom to their annual conference, the kind of Mickey Mouse decision they only backed away from when we caught them.

Instead of using the back pages to cancel the LHIN review, will you put on the front page an end to this bloated health bureaucracy and put the money into front-line care for Ontarians?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only place he'll be Premier of is fantasyland. Talk about secrets: He was part of a government that left a hidden $5.5-billion deficit when they left office. Talk about secrets: They are going to cut $3 billion from health care. And they're not even being secret about full-day learning: They have said that it's a frill; it's not something that's a priority. We disagree.

This government has laid out a plan that will cross a variety of issues: education, health care—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question was asked, and I think all of us would like to hear the answer, particularly those on the side that it was asked by.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have laid out plans that have lowered taxes for 93% of Ontarians and enacted them; they voted against that. Ontarians will turn to this government for a reasonable plan to get back to balance that builds on education and health care, preserves those values, those things that are important to the people of Ontario.

SMART METERS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Two studies show that smart meters are costing most people more money, but the Minister of Energy continues to insist that people are saving. Where is the minister's proof?

Hon. Brad Duguid: In those very studies—indeed, a study from Hydro One indicates that about half of the people they have had online for some time now are seeing benefits, and about $5 a month is the range. As I've said, the savings are modest but they're savings nonetheless.

The other thing that Hydro One's work has revealed is that, indeed, in a survey of 2,000 or 3,000 of their consumers, 80% of them have indicated that they are changing their energy usage patterns. That's a good thing.

There was a time when the NDP used to believe in standing for conservation. There was a time when the very member opposite would have supported efforts to try to encourage people to move off of peak usage. It appears those times are gone.

I ask the member to look back to what he believed in the past and maybe see if it's somewhat reflected in where the NDP wants to go in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I believe in offshore wind power. This is a Minister of Energy who doesn't, so I've had it with the lectures.

Today, the Ontario Energy Association—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My, my, they are cranky, Speaker.

Today, the Ontario Energy Association called on the government to send even stronger price signals. On Monday, the minister told reporters, "At this point in time the program's new, so we haven't set our peak and non-peak prices at a level that is a huge differential." Does he plan to raise those peak rates and, if so, when?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I did have a little trouble hearing the member's question but I think he talked about the report from the Ontario Energy Association. I want to thank them for their report because, indeed, the Ontario Energy Association had a great deal of input into our long-term energy plan and has been very supportive of our long-term energy plan and the directions we've taken. They've made—and I've only had a chance to scan the report—about 12 recommendations to us, which we'll certainly take seriously.

We're going to continue to work with the energy sector and the Ontario Energy Association to build a clean, reliable and modern energy system. They're supporting our efforts to do that, and we welcome input from all in those efforts.

Now, I did ask the Leader of the Opposition to contribute to that discussion. I sent a letter to ask her to contribute to that discussion about a month or so ago, and I got absolutely nothing back.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I always take it as a bad sign when the minister won't answer a question.

Because there might have been a lot of noise and he didn't hear the question, I'm just going to go back and say: So minister, do you plan to raise the peak rates for time of use or not? And if so, if you're going to raise them, will you tell us when?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know that member understands how prices are set in the province of Ontario and I know that he understands that the Ontario Energy Board will come forward every six months with their regulated price plan. That's what's going to happen in the spring, so he'll get those answers in the spring.

One thing I do want to share with the member—I think it's really important because his party no longer seems to be supporting investments in the smart grid—this morning, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and myself made an announcement in partnership with General Electric in the town of Markham: a $40-million investment in a smart grid centre. It's going to create 146 jobs.

Ontario's not only a leader in renewables; we're not only a leader in building a clean energy powerhouse; we're also a global leader in building the smart grid. That's something that's going to benefit us today and it's something that's going to benefit future—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. New question.

1050

SMART METERS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I just wish you were more concerned about investing in people's homes and businesses to help them cut their energy bills. I think that would be more welcome—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Excuse me; the question is to the Minister of Energy?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It seemed to continue and flow for me, Speaker.

Families in Hamilton and Niagara are being asked to pay even more for smart meters. The Ontario Energy

Board approved another increase in smart meter charges in that area. Are other utilities next?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, I'm getting the impression that the NDP thinks we can install four and a half million smart meters across this province and there's no cost to it. There are costs. There are costs to building a clean, reliable, modern energy system. There's no question about it. But the fact is, other jurisdictions around the world are following our lead, modernizing their—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Once again, I say that those who ask the question may want to hear the answers.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Other jurisdictions around the world are indeed following our lead: Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria, Spain, France, Italy, New Zealand, Ireland, Malta, California, Texas, Maine, New York, Ohio, Virginia, Florida and Alabama, to name a few. Why does the NDP think families in Malta and Alabama deserve a more modern energy grid than families here in Ontario? Why do you think those families deserve to have a modern—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm glad that Alabama is finally catching up to us.

The Premier and his Minister of Energy said that smart meters would definitely save people money. A billion dollars—or more—is a lot of money. It could have been spent on direct conservation, like home energy retrofits. That would have made a lot of sense.

Instead of helping people conserve and save money, isn't this more about raising rates through the back door?

Hon. Brad Duguid: His leader stood in this House and criticized the very investments we were making in the program he just talked about. You can't have it both ways.

The investment in smart meters—and the member should know this—will accrue revenues of about $1.6 billion back to energy consumers over the course of the next 15 years. He should know that that's a good investment. It's modernizing our energy infrastructure.

Ontario is ahead of the rest of the world, but others are following close behind. I'll say it again: Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria, Spain, France, Italy, New Zealand, Ireland, Malta, California, Texas, Maine, New York, Ohio, Virginia, Florida and Alabama, and those are just a few.

We're ahead of them, but we believe that Ontario families deserve a more modern energy system than the people of Malta, the people of Alabama and the rest of the world. We're going to make the investments we need to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A minister who is willing to shut down the home energy savings program is in no position to lecture this House about energy efficiency.

Families in Hamilton, in Niagara and across Ontario are being told to pay more: more when they turn on their lights and more for the meter that's already costing them. There's one way to figure out whether the $1 billion in smart meters was a worthwhile investment: New Democrats think that it's time—and it's long overdue—to call in the Auditor General, open the books, ask the right questions and get the answers.

Will the minister agree and support our call for the auditor to evaluate his smart meter program?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The NDP continue to try to have it both ways. On one hand, they talk about being in favour of conservation. On one hand, they talk about wanting to modernize our energy grid. But when it comes down to making the investments, they run; they hide; they don't want anything to do with that.

Building a clean, reliable, modern energy system isn't easy. It takes investment. It takes effort. The NDP may think you can deliver that without investment, without effort, but the people of Ontario—Ontario families—are going to see right through those guys. They know that what we're doing here in this province to build a clean, reliable and modern energy system is worthwhile; that it's something that's going to benefit them in their future. It's going to help get us out of dirty coal. It's going to help build a cleaner, healthier future for their kids. We're creating thousands of jobs as we're doing it. It's going to help create a more prosperous economy—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. New question.

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, the Ontario PC caucus revealed that the cost to install your smart meter tax machines was now over $1 billion. It rivals your eHealth boondoggle in Liberal waste.

Then yesterday, on top of all that, we found out that Hamilton and Niagara families are going to get a 33% increase in the bill to pay for your smart meter tax machines. So instead of the relief that you want to give to families, you're jacking up the rates on Niagara and Hamilton families to pay for your smart meter tax machines.

Minister, when will you get in touch with what's happening across the province and pull the plug on your wasteful smart meter tax machine experiment?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That diatribe contains about as much credible information as the first question that he asked, when he got up with information that was totally incorrect and made accusations that, frankly, were pretty mean-spirited about our character over here and what we're doing on a particular issue. He was dead wrong. He put out a press release, continued the incorrect information, which I'm sure he knew was incorrect, and he still has not to this day apologized.

What that does, in my view, is it tells us what kind of character this Leader of the Opposition has, when he's

wrong, when he makes accusations that impugn motives or people's characters, and he does not have the courage or the integrity to take them back, apologize for what he said earlier—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Stop the clock. We're just going to take a breather.

Are you all ready to continue?

Interjection: What about withdrawing?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): What about I decide what we'll do up here?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm not impartial. The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, I'd like to tell you that I'm not impartial.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Obviously, the Minister of Energy is becoming unravelled here a little bit. It's not surprising, considering this is the last person on earth who claims that smart meter tax machines are saving families money. Nobody believes this voice in the smart meter wilderness. Dalton McGuinty's smart meter tax machines are taking more money out of Ontario families' pockets that they can't afford, and that's why you should call a halt to this latest attack on the pocketbook of Ontario families.

Quite frankly, Minister, I don't need the Premier to lecture my mom to get up at midnight to do her laundry. I don't expect the Premier to lecture seniors in this province to get up and do the laundry on Saturdays. I don't think it's the role of the Premier—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Stop the clock.

Come to order. Would the government benches come to order? The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. The member for Oxford. The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I'm warning you.

Just to clear the record, it is "I am not partial."

Continue your supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't need the Premier lecturing families to have all the kids showered and fed and ready for school before 7 a.m., when the higher charges come in, and if they dare to disobey Premier Dad, he's going to nail them with higher hydro rates. I think that's wrong. Why won't you unplug your expensive hydro meter experiment and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Minister of Energy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member brought up his mother. One of the things that certainly my parents taught me is that when I'm wrong on something, when I accuse somebody of doing something that's incorrect, I apologize. You come clean with people. You withdraw it, or you correct the record. That's just common courtesy. I keep going back there, but I really think that that's something that indicates character in people.

1100

My parents taught me that being honest is a very, very important quality, and when I make a mistake—and I do, from time to time—I apologize. I come clean with people, and I'm very honest if I do say something to somebody that's incorrect.

All I'm asking is that the Leader of the Opposition think of those things, because I'm sure his mother taught him many of those same qualities.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have another question for the Minister of Energy, and I'm pleased that he is taking a position in support of honesty today.

Ontario Power Generation has launched an ad campaign promising to complete the refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear plant on time and on budget, which the ad says they did with their last three major nuclear projects. According to the Ontario Clean Air Alliance, every nuclear project in Ontario's history has gone over budget.

Why is the minister allowing OPG to so blatantly mislead Ontarians?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd like you to withdraw that last comment.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Sorry, Speaker. I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister of Energy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know the NDP do not support nuclear power, but I think Ontario families would want to know: What are they going to replace it with? It's half of our baseload capacity.

I know it's a long-standing philosophical position that, for years, they have supported. I think the people of Ontario have moved on from those days. We have a very good experience with nuclear here in this province. It provides half of our baseload capacity. It supports 70,000 jobs across this country, and most of them are here in the province of Ontario—jobs one would think that the NDP would care about. Workers are working very hard to ensure that we keep the lights on in this province.

If we want to have a reliable energy system going forward into the future, if we want to have a strong economy over the course of the next 10 or 20 years, we're going to have to keep working with our nuclear sector to, indeed, refurbish our units, which is something that needs to be done—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister seems to have forgotten his response to an earlier question this morning.

OPG is trying to convince Ontarians that it can build, or rebuild, a nuclear reactor on budget by trying to rewrite Ontario's history of nuclear delays and cost overruns. The Minister of Energy is responsible for advising and directing this government-owned corporation.

Will the minister demand that OPG pull these ads and promise Ontarians that they—Ontarians—won't pay for the inevitable cost overruns of the Darlington rebuild?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The NDP have no idea about the contribution to this economy that the nuclear industry is

making: 70,000 jobs across Canada, the majority of which are here in Ontario. We support the nuclear industry here in this province. We need to refurbish those units because we need those units for our baseload capacity to ensure we can provide a reliable source of power for Ontario families and businesses for the next 20 years.

These are important investments. Yes, they're significant investments, investments I guess the NDP would not support, but what do they support? They seem to be moving away from wind energy. They don't seem to be supporting investments that we've made in renewable power. They're not supporting our investments to modernize our energy system. They're not supporting our investments when it comes to conservation. They don't support natural gas power. There's not a lot left. We're going to have to get out the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. New question.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS STRATEGY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I had the privilege of sitting on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, where members of all parties learned and listened by travelling across the province. The issue of mental health supports for people who need them is something that means a great deal to me, and it was made even more so by the heart-wrenching stories that we heard. We heard from families, service providers and mental health consumers about their experiences with the system, and we heard about what needs to happen in order to make the system meet the needs of the consumers it serves.

Minister, can you tell us what the government is doing in response to the recommendations of the select committee, which were intended to build a better system to support Ontarians with mental health challenges?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for her question and for her unwavering commitment to people with mental health and addiction challenges.

The select committee's non-partisan approach and willingness to delve into very difficult issues was unprecedented. It's the kind of approach that an issue like this deserves, and I do want to take a moment and thank the chair, our member from Oakville, and all members of the committee for the work that they did.

In addition to the select committee, my predecessor as Minister of Health, the member from Don Valley East, established the minister's advisory committee to advise us on the development of a 10-year strategy. Together, these reports are helping us develop our 10-year mental health and addictions strategy.

Mental health and addictions is complex. It involves many ministries, and it involves community partners as well. We are taking the time to get it right, but we are committed to releasing it this spring.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you to the minister for the update on the status of the response to the select committee's recommendations.

In part of my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, which is in the South West LHIN, I have been hearing concerns about changes to the way that mental health services are being delivered. It seems there are some who are interested in maintaining the status quo and ensuring that services get to people the way they always have: through institutions and in residential settings. Can the minister please provide clarity to this House about what is happening with mental health services in my communities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue.

I, too, have heard concerns from people who are more interested in protecting the status quo than responding to the evidence that tells us that community-based supports are very often better for people, providing care for people in their community and close to their families. That's why we're investing more in community-based care; in the South West LHIN, we've been able to increase funding by 61% on communities.

But I do want to say that both the select committee and the minister's advisory group identified stigmatization of vulnerable people as the most important issue that we must address, immediately and together. I find it absolutely appalling that the Leader of the Opposition would further stigmatize an already vulnerable group, especially on the day that we are debating an opposition day motion about addictions and mental health.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. We know that a carbon tax isn't the only tax you're looking at hitting Ontario families with: The member for Don Valley East introduced both a water tax bill and an education tax bill in this Legislature. Ontario families know there isn't a tax you don't like. Which of these three can we expect to read about tomorrow?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: None of them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: So does that mean we'll find out about it after the next election?

Ontario families can't afford a carbon tax, a water tax or an education tax, but then Ontario families couldn't afford the health tax, the HST, eco taxes or your expensive energy experiments, and that didn't stop Premier McGuinty. At the end of the day, Premier McGuinty is hard-wired to tax and will tax again. The only question is, when and where will the out-of-touch Premier strike next?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There will be no tax increases in the budget.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

1110

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, tonight the Toronto District School Board is considering TV advertising targeted at students in 74 high schools. Does the minister support the Toronto school board's plan to commercialize education?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to respond because it gives me an opportunity to again remind the members of this House that we have significantly increased the support of students in the Toronto District School Board. We will continue to do that. And I'm sure that the honourable member also appreciates that we are in the process of considering how school boards can raise funds, whether through fundraising, adding fees and in fact corporate sponsorship.

We have not yet published the corporate piece. I think that parents in the Toronto District School Board are very interested and have an important role to play in having the school board understand whether or not they think this is an appropriate venue and way for the school board to raise funds. But I'm happy that I am able to remind people in the Toronto District School Board catchment that our commitment to education funding has—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Toronto school board is about to sign a seven-year contract to allow television ads in 74 high schools, all to raise about $1,000 per school. The McGuinty government has obstinately refused, and you have obstinately refused, to establish guidelines for school fundraising, and now Ontario's largest school board, starved for cash, is being forced to sell access to students to marketing firms and big companies.

Why won't the minister speak out against the introduction of television advertising in schools before it's too late?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I had the privilege of being the chair of a school board in the 1990s, and I can say that at that time, school boards were starved for cash; they were.

What I can say now is that our government has increased funding to school boards by 40%, and we've done that in the face of declining enrolment.

With respect to the guidelines for students' fees, they have been put out for consultation. We are getting feedback. We are going to be posting guidelines for fundraising and we are also going to be dealing with corporate sponsorship.

What I think is important is that parents in the Toronto District School Board make it very clear to the people they elected—they elected them just last October—and have them know how they feel about this proposal. This is the role and responsibility of school boards, and I think they have an obligation to pay attention to what parents and people in their communities are saying about how they're raising funds.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, yesterday the latest graduation rate was announced, and the Leader of the Opposition said that the increase in the graduation rate is due to the fact that our government has been watering down the curriculum and lowering the bar. He said yesterday that we've made it easier for students to pass standardized tests. He claims that students will be in for a rude awakening when they graduate.

Would the minister explain to my constituents what these assertions made by the Leader of the Opposition are all about? Is the increase in the graduation rate really the result of school being easier for students?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is an important question, and I was so disappointed when the opposition basically slapped our students' quest yesterday, first when they said that those students who work very hard and achieve a graduation diploma over five years instead of four don't deserve to be counted. We are not of that mind. They do deserve to be counted.

The other slap was that because there are more successful students, the curriculum must be watered down. To the members who are heckling me today, I would draw your attention to the PISA test—the international body that tests students in Ontario. What they have said is that our students in the province of Ontario are among the top five in the world. That's an international, independent body. So they are in denial about the success of our students—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My constituents will be pleased to know that we are supporting our students and teachers. We all know how hard our teachers work to prepare our students for the future.

Minister, I've been hearing from my constituents that there is some confusion about how the graduation rate is calculated. There have been assertions by some that the graduation rate has been inflated, that the government is just painting a rosy picture that is not actually the case in Ontario. What can I tell my constituents about this? Are Ontario students actually achieving better, or is the graduation rate being calculated to inflate the numbers? My constituents want an answer.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The answer is very simple: If students enter a high school and they graduate, they're counted. We don't distinguish whether they take four years or five years. They are successful. They have worked hard. Their parents are proud of their accomplishments, and we are proud to stand behind them and say, "You matter to us. We count you. You are part of the 81% of students in Ontario who have graduated." That will be a part of our number.

One thing that we're doing, as well, to ensure that students continue to be successful is full-day kindergarten. We know that when our youngest learners are supported, they are more than likely to graduate. The opposition are prepared to have have and have-not schools. They are not committed to full-day kindergarten. That is clear. Our commitment is that all schools, by 2014, will have full-day kindergarten.

It would be a have and have-not world if Tim Hudak were the Premier of Ontario. Families in Ontario voted the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Education. This week, the McGuinty Liberals once again revealed just how out of touch they are with Ontario families. After the Minister of Research and Innovation said that parents opposed to sex ed being taught to their six-year-olds were homophobes, both the Premier and the Minister of Education refused to say that he was wrong. Will the Minister of Education finally stand up today and condemn the comments from the Minister of Research and Innovation?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I am prepared to condemn is any plan that will create a crisis in education. A lack of commitment to full-day kindergarten will create have and have-not schools in the province of Ontario. That is a crisis in education.

When the opposition refuses to recognize the achievements of students who have worked hard for five years to graduate, that, in my view, is a crisis.

They are absolutely intent on maintaining their policy of the past, and that is to create a crisis; that is to beat up on our students and our teachers. What I can say to the member opposite is, that is not a part of our plan. We have supported students since we've come to government, and that will continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: The McGuinty Liberals just don't have any respect for Ontario families. They tell us that they have a more intelligent understanding than parents. They stand by when one of their own insults parents and communities all across this great province.

Minister, is the reason nobody over there will condemn the comments from the Minister of Research and Innovation because all Liberal MPPs agree with them?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What we condemn is a lack of commitment to all of the students in the province of Ontario. Every student deserves the commitment of their government. Certainly, parents who have children in McNab Public School in Arnprior, Good Shepherd School in Brampton,or Mohawk Gardens Public School in Burlington are parents who want to know that their children will be treated fairly and equitably, that they will be able to access a wonderful program that will ensure student success going forward.

1120

Their plan is for a two-tiered education system; our plan is to invest in students—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington: I've heard enough, so a warning.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: They're about a two-tiered system. They don't like the response because it puts them on the spot. It requires them to—

Interjections.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Are you going to have full-day kindergarten for every student in Ontario or are you going to have a two-tiered system of education?

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry—it's such a long title. Minister, a short question: Why did you not support the community of Wawa in its bid to hold on to the wood of that community and allow them to restructure the Weyerhaeuser plant?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think, as most of the members of the House know, we have a wood supply competition that's going on in the province of Ontario, one where we want to see, in the short term, our wood being put back to work.

We brought forward a wood supply competition about a year ago; 115 applicants came forward with proposals. It's certainly a complicated and long process, but one where, indeed, we are in the process now of being in a position to make some announcements. We've had some very good announcements all across the north, which are creating work in each of those communities and also retaining jobs. It's a wonderful thing in that sense.

There are challenges, of course. There are applications that are out there that we've not yet been able to respond to.

As the member also knows, I'm not in a position to speak about applications on a specific basis. We in fact set up the system very carefully under the watchful eye of a Fairness Commissioner to make sure that the recommendations that came forward were done in an absolutely fair and transparent way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You say, "wonderful"? That's not the definition that Mayor Nowicki would give. They're not happy. They don't think this is wonderful. In fact, you sent them a letter on February 7 saying, "No, you have lost out in the wood competition process." That has effectively hamstrung that community from being able to figure out how to restructure that mill so they can get back up and running again.

My question to you is very simple: Why do you not allow the communities to hold on to the wood that they

previously had in their communities so they can restructure and look forward to a brighter future that truly would be wonderful?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, the wood supply competition was set up, making available about 10 million cubic metres of wood across the province. Some 115 applications came forward. We are very pleased about the fact that, indeed, there's a number of very successful applicants. Decisions that were being made are obviously very challenging as well, because it is a complex process.

Again, we set it up so that the minister did not make decisions based on a partisan basis. I think that was very, very important to do. We are continuing to work with all the communities, including those communities that have not been successful with their applications. We are working with them. We are offering them opportunities for a debriefing, and we are going to continue to work with them.

We recognize—as certainly I do, as an MPP for a riding that has so many operations that obviously are looking for a bright future in the forestry sector—how challenging it is, which is why we are going to continue to work with each of those communities, including the community of Wawa.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. It's clear that youth receiving support and protection from Ontario's children's aid societies are some of the most vulnerable kids in our province. While we acknowledge that the government is taking steps to improve and modernize our child protection system, resulting in fewer kids entering care and more youth given the chance to succeed, we also know there are unique challenges faced by aboriginal communities with respect to child welfare.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Dilico Anishinabek Family Care provides a range of responsive individual, family and community programs and services for all Anishinabek people.

In addition to the work that goes on at Dilico, government has a significant role to play in supporting the needs of aboriginal children across Ontario. What is our government doing to improve the quality of life for aboriginal kids and their families?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Our government has made it a real priority to understand the challenges faced by aboriginal communities and to take action to support these needs. I've heard from chiefs and councils, teachers, foster parents, front-line workers and public health nurses that the challenges faced by aboriginal children and youth are unique and require an approach that recognizes that fact.

The appointment of John Beaucage as aboriginal adviser is part of our government's commitment to achieve better outcomes for aboriginal children and youth in need of protection, both on and off reserve. Mr. Beaucage continues to guide discussions with aboriginal leaders and front-line service providers, and offer advice on aboriginal child welfare.

I'm currently working with John Beaucage to host a summit in April 2011 that will determine how we can work together to improve prevention approaches and the delivery of child welfare services to aboriginal children and youth right across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Minister. Those investments are critical and their effects will be felt by aboriginal youth and their families in my riding and right across the province. But it's also important to recognize the importance of designated aboriginal children's aid societies.

Dilico embraces a holistic approach to the delivery of health, mental health, addictions and child welfare services to complement the strengths, values and traditions of Anishinabek children, families and communities. Quoting their website, "Our vision is balance and well-being for Anishinabek children, families and communities."

Can the minister please tell the House how our government demonstrates its commitment to supporting the designation of aboriginal CASs?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to acknowledge the great work being done by Dilico and all of our aboriginal child welfare agencies.

Having aboriginal CASs is important to us, and that's why we ended the previous government's moratorium on new CASs and have designated two new aboriginal CASs. My ministry's regional offices are currently working with a number of aboriginal service providers that are seeking designation as aboriginal CASs. We are providing $3 million this year to aboriginal service providers to help them with capacity-building during the designation process. In the past four years, we've given almost $9 million in funding support for this process. Dilico has been allocated over $25 million to support and protect vulnerable kids and families, and that is a 148% increase since 2003.

We want all of these kids, all aboriginal children across the province, to achieve their full potential. We're working with community partners to make sure that we deliver the future for them that we aspire to for all of our kids.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, it seems that every day we add another chapter to your government's book on your expensive energy experiments. In January, the C.D. Howe Institute reported that you spent a billion dollars exporting Ontario power to Quebec and the United States, giving them discount power while Ontario families are paying skyrocketing prices for hydro. Next, we saw your government backtrack on a moratorium on offshore wind development. Finally, we witnessed thousands of mostly

rural residents being told the microFIT project cannot be connected to the grid.

Rather than wasting your time on these failed energy experiments, why don't you focus on the clean, reliable power offered by Darlington's nuclear project? Nuclear energy supplies over 50% of energy in Ontario. Minister, will you make a commitment to the Darlington new-build project here today? Make that commitment.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member's from Durham, for crying out loud. Where have you been as we've been talking about our commitment to these two new units over the course of the last year? He's from that community. He should be paying attention to the announcements after announcements, the speeches after speeches, the number of times in this Legislature that this government has committed itself to that project.

But what we're not going to do is what his leader wants to do. His leader said earlier that we should purchase those units without regard to the price. Early on in the process, it would have cost us billions more than we will end up paying. They're impulse nuclear shoppers. We're going to be very responsible. We care about the prices that we pay. We're going to be making sure we get a good deal for Ontario taxpayers, Ontario consumers. There's no question; we're moving forward—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's revealing that you make a lot of speeches and a lot of promises, but you don't do anything. That's the problem.

Wasting time and money on expensive energy experiments like wind and solar power isn't being fair to the people or the consumers of Ontario. We need clean, reliable and safe power for the future, instead of your expensive energy experiments, which have driven up the price of energy to families in Ontario by over 75%. How can you expect Ontario families to take your word when your actions tell a completely different story?

1130

Minister, all I'm asking you to do today is make a clear, unambiguous commitment to the new-build nuclear at Darlington, starting here, right now, today.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thought I just did that, but we'll keep doing it. We're very committed to building these two new units.

But he really ought to be talking to his cousins in Ottawa, because we were very much along on this purchase when the federal government decided they were going to restructure AECL.

It's very clear that while we're working hard to make sure we get a good price for Ontario families, their priority is to try to get a good price for Stephen Harper. That's not where we're at; that may be where they're at. They may be shilling for the federal government on this.

We're standing up for Ontario consumers, to make sure we get a good deal for Ontario consumers, make sure we purchase these two new nuclear units and make sure we stand up for the 70,000 people in the nuclear industry. We may be the only government left in this country doing that, but we will purchase those new units.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to Minister of Consumer Services. Seniors, some wheelchair-bound, in a seven-storey Stoney Creek condo were without elevator service for three weeks. They prepared for a two-week elevator repair but never imagined a full week's wait for a TSSA inspector. They were told that the TSSA was unavailable to inspect because they were all away at a conference.

Why would the minister—

Interjection: Over here.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, you change ministers every day.

Why would the minister allow any agency's entire inspection team to be shut down for several days?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I always look forward to a question from the member from Hamilton East on an issue like this or any other.

I'm not familiar with the situation. If you want to talk to me about it—what you've described so far sounds to me as if it's unacceptable. Seniors in a large building should not be without elevator service for a week. I'm willing to look into it, and I'm willing to work with the member to get this issue resolved.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Minister, but I have to do my supplementary.

The TSSA has just appointed its first chief safety and risk officer to review, analyze and prepare public reports on the safety activities of the TSSA. He will review and analyze any safety matters that he, the TSSA board or the Minister of Consumer Services identifies as being in the public interest.

Will the minister direct the chief safety and risk officer to investigate this loss of service for these seniors, and will she—sorry; we've changed ministers—will he guarantee that no one else will suffer a loss of service like this again?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, the TSSA is primarily concerned about safety in a number of different areas. They have a tough job; they do a good job in most circumstances.

I'm very pleased that, recently, they have employed the services of a chief safety officer. Undoubtedly, I will be asking him to look into this situation as well, and we will try to get this resolved as soon as possible.

Thank you very much for your supplementary question, but we want to make sure that our member gets a final question as well.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, source protection committees

are hard at work across the province on plans to protect their local sources of drinking water.

The Trent committee in my own riding of Northumberland–Quinte West is a great example. They have engaged in the community, enlisted local assistance and outlined every step of the process.

Still, some residents are concerned about a previous comment made by the member from Simcoe North that committees are sending threatening and intimidating letters.

Minister, is it true that these plans will negatively impact rural property owners?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend from Northumberland for the question, because he understands that one of the most important things we can do is to keep our sources of drinking water safe. We do that by having a plan that works from the groundwater up.

So we have, across the province of Ontario, our source water planning protection committees, which are not made up of anonymous people but are made up of citizens: very competent, very professional and very committed citizens who understand that they play a vital role in ensuring that our sources of drinking water are kept safe in the first place. So I reject the allegation from the member for Simcoe North that these people are anonymous. That is not true.

I want to thank the member for Northumberland, because I know that in his community some $333,000 has been committed by our ministry, through our stewardship funding, to early actions, to fund remediation around the Trent River and in the Trent River watershed. I want to thank the member for the work that he has done in supporting that effort from the groundwater up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no deferred votes, this House will recess until 3 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming Debbie Gordon to the Legislature today. She is wearing two hats, one as a member of the campaign to save the Maskinonge River and the other as a member of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. Please welcome Debbie Gordon.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: A bit later, I will be introducing a private member's bill that actually was originated by a gentleman who joins us in the east gallery today and who is a former page: Alex Don, who is here with his mother, Irina. Also with us are Fernando Costa, who is his guidance counsellor at Assumption high school; David Medhurst; Ken Lewenza, the president of the Canadian Auto Workers; Nancy Kirby, president of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association; Barbara Klassen, who is a trauma program coordinator at Hamilton General Hospital; Paul Cianciolo, the principal of Assumption high school; and Tony Ferguson, who is the father of Alex's Australian friend. They have joined us today to witness the introduction of a private member's bill that was initiated by the work of Alex, a former page here five years ago.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to recognize Caroline Schultz, who is the executive director for Ontario Nature. She lives in my riding of Durham and is here today with the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt group.

As well, I would like to recognize Liang Chen, who is the next member from the riding of Scarborough–Agincourt.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to once again denounce Israeli Apartheid Week. Despite our efforts last fall, we are still hearing stories of student intimidation and hatemongering under the guise of so-called educational programs in support of Israeli Apartheid Week.

Last autumn, this House unanimously passed my resolution to ban the use of this violent, prejudicial term. I was delighted to see that all MPPs of all political stripes stood together to condemn that word "apartheid" for what it really is: hate-filled. Sadly, a unanimous resolution by this assembly sends a message but has no force in law.

I stand in this House today to condemn again this vicious week that has caused students to be intimidated on their own university and college campuses and prevented peaceful and productive discussion about the issues in the Middle East, a region in turmoil. The Ontario Legislature seldom has the opportunity to comment on issues that exist in other jurisdictions, but it is clear to me that this is an issue which is spilling into our educational institutions, from the university level through college and now even at the high school level.

In my riding, I have heard from people about the harm that this annual event causes, potentially physically and certainly emotionally. I have committed to the residents of Thornhill that hatred will not be tolerated in any shape or form and that, as their elected representative, I will do my job to ensure that we stamp out hatred in all its forms.

I ask this House to support me once again in condemning the use of the term "Israeli Apartheid Week" and to join me in bringing an end to hatred in Ontario.

LEADING WOMEN BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARDS

Mr. Phil McNeely: On Monday, the minister responsible for women's issues, the Honourable Laurel Broten, visited Ottawa–Orléans to join me in recognizing 18 women whose efforts have contributed to the greater well-being of their community and fellow residents.

The Leading Women/Leading Girls Building Communities Awards honour women and girls who actively demonstrate excellent leadership in areas such as athletics, international work, civic projects and school initiatives. My office received a number of nominations this year, representing a diverse group of women who share a common purpose: to make their community a better place to live. I was honoured to be able to recognize these women one day prior to the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. On a day when we celebrate the achievements of women all over the world, it gave me great pleasure to celebrate the achievements of women in Ottawa–Orléans. I'm sure you will join me in congratulating them and thanking all the leading women and girls in our respective ridings who have been recognized through this important program.

This year's recipients in my riding are: Geraldine Dixon; Catherine Jellett; Christine Flammer; Marie-Claude Doucet; Emily Leahy; Rachel Lalonde; Kellie Ring; Gayle Downing; Anaëlle Raffray; Julie Lizotte; Moji and Shola Agoro; Alexa Brewer; Johanne Lacombe; Mary Lou Maisonneuve; Mashooda Syed; Nathalie Lafrenière; and Debbie Orth.

Our communities and this assembly owe all of this year's recipients our sincere gratitude.

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mrs. Julia Munro: I welcome today an important resident of my local community: Debbie Gordon, who for many years has worked tirelessly to help clean up and preserve our local environment. She has worked hard on many issues, such as the Oak Ridges moraine and the campaign to save the Maskinonge River.

An important concern in our area for many, many years, and one that Debbie has worked on tirelessly, is the cleanup of the Thane Developments aluminum smelter site in Georgina. Cleaning up this property is a question of money, as much as possibly $4 million, and who should pay.

I don't claim to have the answers, but I know someone who did: the Premier. A letter that Debbie wrote to our local paper in 2007 outlines his promise. She writes that in 2002, he "personally promised me, if elected, he would clean up the abandoned aluminum smelter on Georgina's Warden Avenue. Advocate editor John Slykhuis and Carol McDermott of the South Lake Simcoe Naturalists were witnesses to that promise. That promise has not been kept."

If the Premier doesn't have the money to keep this promise, why did he make it in the first place?

JACK FREER

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to bring attention to this House and to the people of Ontario of a monumental event in the life of Jack Freer. Jack Freer, this Saturday, will be celebrating 60 years of doing barbering in East York.

He started being a barber in East York at the age of 15, when he apprenticed, and he apprenticed at the corner of Cosburn and Woodbine Avenues. He worked for someone else, but over the years, he bought out that business and set up his own.

He started being a barber in East York 60 years ago, when it was mostly rural, when there were a few houses—the first few houses that were being built after the war. He has continued until this very day and has seen a huge change in the community, from being one that was rural to one that is part of the city of Toronto urban fabric.

He has cut the hair now of four generations of East Yorkers. This coming Saturday, he will be celebrating with friends and customers as he launches year 61. Over all of those years, he has made us all look a little bit better, he has made us all look a little bit sharper and he has made sure that people in East York just have that cut above some of the others.

We salute him this coming Saturday. Anybody who has an opportunity to come to Jack's barber shop at Cosburn and Woodbine I'm sure would be more than welcome.

CANADIAN FORCES STATION ALERT

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with you and my colleagues an amazing experience I had last month. I had the opportunity to visit the Canadian Forces Station Alert, which is a unit of 8 Wing Trenton, located in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West.

Alert is the most northerly permanently inhabited location in the world. It's located only 817 kilometres from the North Pole, and believe me, it's cold. February average temperatures are around minus 37 degrees Celsius—but they tell me it's a dry cold.

Alert experiences polar nights from October to February with 24-hour darkness. I had the great fortune of being there during a full moon, which lit the scenic background to be one of the most spectacular views I've ever witnessed in my life.

I didn't think it was possible for me to be more thankful for what our servicemen and women do, but after this experience, I can truly say that I have even more admiration and gratitude for their unconditional dedication.

The base has provided me with some great photos of this trip, which can now be enjoyed by all on my Facebook page.

I want to take this opportunity to convey my deep gratitude to Colonel David Cochrane and all who were involved in making this the most memorable trip of a lifetime.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today with concerns over comments the Liberal Minister of Natural Resources, Linda Jeffrey, made to representatives from the township of Melancthon at a recent meeting.

1510

Late last week, the township received a submission to amend their official plan and zoning bylaw to allow for a 2,300-acre limestone quarry. This is the largest application ever submitted in the province.

The township, anticipating that a quarry application would be filed in the near future, proactively met with the minister last week during ROMA concerning this pending application, as this issue is of great importance to the community. When meeting with the minister, the township's council insisted on a thorough review of the application following the most rigid standards available through proven science and technology.

When meeting with the Melancthon delegation, the minister said, "It is too bad that this has split your community apart. It is your job to get your community together, get them to think long term about rehabilitation, because this will not be going back to agriculture, but maybe you could get a nice golf course." A golf course? Twenty-three hundred acres is enough space for 15 golf courses. This statement leaves us with the impression that this Liberal minister had already chosen a side, even before the application for the quarry was filed.

I share the mayor's and Melancthon council's concerns, and disbelief, quite frankly, regarding these comments. It is wrong for this minister to have chosen a side without allowing the MNR to complete a thorough and comprehensive review of the application and to have jeopardized the application, because residents are concerned that the minister is not impartial.

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA HEART INSTITUTE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I am pleased to rise today to speak about the University of Ottawa Heart Institute's annual telethon, which I was proud to be part of this past weekend. This was the heart institute's 20th annual telethon, which raises funds in support of cardiovascular research and improves patient care and outcomes both in Canada and around the world. The University of Ottawa Heart Institute is the only genetics research centre for heart disease in Canada, and I'm very proud that it is located in the riding of Ottawa Centre.

This year the telethon raised an incredible $5.85 million because of the generosity of a very kind city. I want to personally congratulate everyone who organized and took part in the event on this monumental achievement. Not only was the event a major success for the institute, but it demonstrated a remarkable level of community engagement.

Dr. Robert Roberts, the president and CEO of the heart institute, stated that it was a phenomenal day for his organization, but perhaps more important was the knowledge that the community is completely behind the institute. Dr. Roberts and his team recently discovered 13 more genes that contribute to heart disease, a discovery that was made possible through funds raised at events such as the telethon.

Other members of the heart institute pivotal to making this event a success were Alan Rottenberg, the chairman; Paul LaBarge, vice-chair of the foundation; Barry Stanton, director of development; and Tom Hewitt, who is the president of the University of Ottawa Heart Institute Foundation.

FARM SAFETY

Mr. Rick Johnson: Next week marks Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. With spring just around the corner and farmers looking forward to getting out to their fields, this week is intended to heighten safety awareness for everyone involved in the agriculture sector.

Many farms in this province are family operations. Where the home doubles as an industrial worksite, safety must always come first. By planning and taking measures, we can lessen serious injuries that can have devastating and even fatal results.

As the lead agency for farm safety, Safe Workplace Promotion Services Ontario, formerly the Farm Safety Association, delivers excellent safety awareness programs to agricultural workers and farmers across the province. Our government has been working with them for over 10 years to help keep Ontario farm families aware and safe. Our goal is to reduce the occurrence of workplace injuries and illness on farms and in horticulture and landscape operations.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week gives us the opportunity to reflect on work we have done over the years to improve our farm safety record. Through our continued efforts, farm-related incidents have been on the decline. I invite all members of the House to join me as we recognize Canadian Agricultural Safety Week and strive to one day eliminate all workplace injuries on farms across this province.

LAKEHEAD THUNDERWOLVES

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last weekend, for the very first time in the school's history, Thunder Bay's Lakehead University Thunderwolves won the Wilson Cup, which is the OUA championship for men's basketball.

During the semifinal action, the Thunderwolves defeated the University of Ottawa 71-69 and followed that up in the finals with a 77-62 victory over the top-ranked team, the Carleton Ravens, the first loss in league play of the year for the Ravens.

Led by Coach Scott Morrison, the Lakehead Thunderwolves are now off to Halifax, where they'll make their second straight appearance at the national championships.

I've been a fan of basketball for a long time and I played the game for many years, so I'm especially excited by the Thunderwolves' victory. When I was in high school, I remember watching the great Lakehead Norwesters teams of the 1970s. The current Thunderwolves have brought back that tradition of excellence. They've shown that they can take on the best teams in

Ontario. It's fantastic to see our men's program back competing at a high level.

I want to congratulate the entire team for their hard work and their excellent performance. A special congratulations to the local standouts Andrew Hackner and Matt Schmidt, who have contributed to seeing the first OUA basketball championship banner hung from the rafters of Lakehead University.

Tipoff for the Thunderwolves' first game at the national championship is 2:15 p.m. this Friday, against the fifth-seed Trinity Western Spartans. I'll be cheering for you, and so will the rest of Thunder Bay.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report on the pre-budget consultation 2011 from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr45, An Act to revive 1312510 Ontario Ltd.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOVICE DRIVER "P" PLATE ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 EXIGEANT UNE PLAQUE "P" POUR LES CONDUCTEURS DÉBUTANTS

Mr. Flynn moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to require vehicles driven by novice drivers to display markers or identifying devices / Projet de loi 161, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exiger que les véhicules conduits par des conducteurs débutants affichent des marques ou des moyens d'identification.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act by adding a section to the act. The new section prohibits novice drivers from driving a motor vehicle on a highway unless markers or identifying devices indicating that the vehicle is being driven by a novice driver are displayed on or in the vehicle.

It's important to note that the bill is co-sponsored by the members from Newmarket–Aurora and Timmins–James Bay, but more importantly, to note that the bill actually was the work of Alex Don, whom I introduced earlier, a former legislative page from Oakville and now Burlington. I think he's a perfect example of how young people can involve themselves in politics.

I urge members to pass this bill.

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION AU DIABÈTE

Mrs. Mangat moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to proclaim the month of November Diabetes Awareness Month / Projet de loi 162, Loi proclamant le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au diabète.

1520

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This bill will officially proclaim November as Diabetes Awareness Month in Ontario in an effort to raise public awareness of diabetes and the steps that can be taken to prevent or manage the disease.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am very excited to rise in the House today to announce that the graduation rate for the last year was 81%.

Il s'agit d'une réalisation dont nous pouvons tous être fiers et qui aurait été impossible sans le travail soutenu et le dévouement des élèves, des parents et des éducateurs de l'Ontario.

Year after year, we have seen a steady increase in the graduation rate. When we took office in 2003, only 68% of Ontario students were graduating from high school. That means almost one in three students were not graduating. With a focus on student achievement and supporting our students, almost 20,000 more students graduated in 2009-10 than would have graduated had the rate stayed at 68%. This represents an increase of 13 percentage points over the 2003-04 rate. In fact, altogether, about 72,000 additional students have achieved their high school diploma since 2003.

We've made education a priority, and we have increased funding by more than 40% since 2003. We understand that all students do not learn at the same pace and that all students learn differently. That is why we support programs that meet the needs of all Ontario students.

Our student success programs include initiatives like specialist high-skills majors, dual credits and expanded co-op. This year, approximately 28,000 students are involved in over 1,000 specialist high-skills major programs in 540 secondary schools across Ontario. There are also approximately 10,000 students in dual credit programs, an increase of 33% over last year. Now, these programs are different; they are hands-on, and they allow students to customize their high school experience to match their strengths, interests and career goals.

Our new 12 and 12+ initiative also helps re-engage students who have left school or who are not attending school. As of this academic year, 70% of those who have returned are taking three credits or more, and they continue to work toward graduation.

In February, we introduced new school board requirements to strengthen the structure, clarity and consistency of the programs that are provided for excused pupils participating in the supervised alternative learning program.

We are delighted that Ontario students are succeeding and graduating from high school, and I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize our outstanding educators who work directly with the students to help them reach their goals. We applaud their innovation, their determination and their commitment to energizing and enabling Ontario students.

Ontario students are recognized as being in the top 10 in the world in reading, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment study that was released in December. The study also showed that Ontario students are performing very well in math and science.

Notre gouvernement est résolu à aider tous les élèves, sans exception, à réussir et à leur donner la possibilité de réaliser pleinement leur potentiel, à l'école comme dans la vie.

The results speak for themselves: More students are succeeding and earning their diplomas than ever before, since our government came to office.

The future prosperity of Ontario depends on the strength of our students. Building a well-educated, high-skilled workforce is a top priority in today's knowledge-based economy and it is a top priority for our government.

Merci, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Responses?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It's my pleasure to provide the official opposition's response to the minister's statement. We in the PC caucus are steadfastly committed to strengthening Ontario's public education system. We believe firmly that the future prosperity of our province is dependent upon the quality of education we provide to our children.

I would like to remind this House of the PC Party's outstanding and distinguished record of improving education in Ontario. I would like to remind you: We were the party that successfully reformed education funding in Ontario. We eliminated the gross inequities and inequalities that the Liberal Party supported. In Ontario today, students receive equal funding regardless of where they live. In Ontario today, school boards are no longer unfairly taxing families by raising property taxes year after year. Because of our commitment to education, the days of large, affluent urban boards being able to offer better education than small rural boards are over.

The minister spoke about student success. We are the party that established the Education Quality and Accountability Office. We are the party that committed ourselves to ensuring that parents and teachers are aware of how their students are performing. Our long and distinguished record of success in education is indisputable.

This brings me to the minister's statement here today, which, for the record, was filled with half-truths and deliberately murky statistics.

Firstly, let me say how disappointing it is to have a Premier and a minister who are so frightened of losing the next election that they intentionally attempt to dupe Ontario families. I am quite glad that the media called the Premier on his attempt to misinform Ontarians about graduation rates. We hear from our—

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Misinform?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Burlington, there's one that I actually missed, that I should have called you on. I do wish you would tone down the rhetoric and have a more legislative approach to your remarks.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I speak the truth.

I'm quite glad that the media called the Premier on his attempt to misinform Ontarians about—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, we're not going to go there. Withdraw that, please.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

We hear from our education stakeholders quite frequently about how this government's determination to meet their artificially high standard of an 85% graduation rate is hurting Ontario students. University of Western Ontario professor Dr. James Côté contends, "Artificially set graduation numbers are merely self-fulfilling benchmarks established largely for political gain and not indicative of any real success." This is what is happening

here today. I think we should reflect on this profound statement by an expert in education. Clearly, the minister's numbers are meaningless. We know that principals are pressured to go behind the backs of teachers and increase grades in order to meet the Premier's expectations. This government has lowered the bar purely for political reasons. Shame on you.

1530

Universities and colleges are continually pleading with the government to do a better job in training and educating our students. Students are graduating without skills needed to succeed at the post-secondary level. The Premier is okay with this as long as he can include them in his undependable statistics. We in the PC Party are not. We believe that students who have not earned a diploma should not receive one. The Premier, on the other hand, is only concerned with meeting his artificially set graduation rate target. It's our youth who are hurt by this, because this government is allowing them to leave high school unprepared.

This government's commitment to social promotion is undermining the education system. Well, you know what? Talk is cheap, and Ontarians won't be deceived by your government playing fast and loose with figures. Education is too important to play petty political games with. The PC caucus is determined to fix what this government has broken.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response? The member for—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Rosario, be positive.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Let's just take a deep breath again, okay? The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know that some of my long-time colleagues want me to be positive, because they now have Sarah Thomson running against me. She is very concerned that I am just always in opposition, and that if she were in government she would do so much more than Marchese.

I want to try to be as positive as I can. You Liberals are nicer people on the whole—you are—and I like some of you more than others. That's a fact. And it's true, within your limited means and your capacity to give to the educational system, given that you've given so much away to the corporations, including cutting $1.2 billion in income taxes and $6 billion in corporate taxes—given that you've done that, as much as you've given to the educational system, you're giving so much away. You are. So I am always troubled by my desire to be nice and to find positive things to say about all of you, individually and collectively, but I struggle; I really do.

When I hear the minister saying, "We have given more than the Conservatives did," in part that is true. Let me tell you some of the problemos that you are leaving behind, because some of you would rather not hear it. I love the minister when she attacks the Tories. "You don't support full-time JK and SK. You want to create a two-tier system," she says of them. When I say to the minister that parents are fundraising to the tune of $600 million out of their own pockets through an indirect tax, and that that's creating a two-tier system, she says, "Oh, no, that's not true." So the Tories are creating a two-tier system somehow by not accepting full-time JK and SK, but the Liberals are not creating a two-tier system when they have rich families raising a whole lot of money for their kids and a whole lot of poor families that can't, and in her mind that's not creating a two-tier system. I just don't get it, do you? So how can I be nice? That's the question. When I put to you these real, factual questions and you pretend not to hear them, how can I be nice?

The other problemo, a big one, is that a lot of special education kids are falling through the cracks. We're talking about kids with special needs across Ontario. We are talking kids in Scarborough, kids in Thunder Bay, kids all over in Windsor who are not going through an IPRC—identification placement review committee—because you don't have the professionals to do it. You don't have the experts to do it. What do we do? We let the teachers do it because they're so good at identifying problems, and we'll let them do a little program for those kids.

They can't do it. Not every teacher is a special-education teacher. They can't do it. You are allowing mothers and fathers to suffer on their own, leaving them to their own wits and leaving those poor kids suffering in an integrated classroom where they're not getting the extra help that they desperately need.

Then you say, "We have given more money than any other government in the history of this place." Please. You have to stop me from laughing. You have to help me not to laugh so much here during the day, each and every day.

Then you talk about credit integrity. Look, the OSSTF has been telling us for the last three years that they are feeling the pressure to "adjust failing marks." From the same article, teachers are concerned about a system which "allows late assignments to go unpenalized, plagiarized essays to be rewritten, absolute guidelines to be repeatedly extended, unsubmitted work to be accepted after the semester is over, and obvious failures to be overturned." Some 40% of our high school teachers are telling us, and you don't hear it?

Then you come in this House saying, "Our numbers are going up, and more and more are graduating"? You're not hearing the problems that we have: You're graduating students who are not actually doing very well. Teachers are passing them on because they're under pressure to meet your political obligations. That's the problem. University and college professors are complaining that kids have not improved their literacy levels since whenever. Yet you make it appear like kids are doing better academically year after year.

All that's going up are your numbers, not the skill sets of our students. Please help me to be nice to you. Bring something forward that I can support. Don't do this each and every year. It gets tiring.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition directed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by some good citizens of Cambridge which reads:

"Whereas gasoline prices have increased at alarming rates during the past year; and

"Whereas the high and different gas prices in different areas of Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship on hard-working Cambridge families; and

"Whereas ... promises of Liberal Premier McGuinty adversely affect the trust between Ontarians and their elected representatives;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government immediately freeze gas prices for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate; and

"(2) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government and the federal Martin Liberal government"—

Interjections.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: It's an old petition. I didn't say it was up to date.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: —"immediately lower their taxes on gas for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate; and"—

Interjections.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Well, you guys like the high price—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We're not in debate here; we're in petitions. Please, read your petition. On the government side, please listen.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: "(3) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government immediately initiate a royal commission to investigate the predatory gas prices charged by oil companies operating in Ontario."

As I agree with the contents of this petition, I affix my name thereto.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My petition is to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy and bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

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"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more, and I'll give it to Beau to deliver to the table, and I also sign my name.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it via page Emily.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have a petition to, "Say no to Highway 407 terminating at Simcoe Street:

"The province's plan to terminate phase-one construction of Highway 407 at Simcoe Street, Oshawa, is a mistake. It is a plan that does not make economic sense, will create end-of-line gridlock, will be detrimental to our rural community and have a significant negative effect on

commuters, businesses, tourism, public transit, the historic hamlet of Columbus and all citizens of Durham region.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend the Highway 407 extension eastward and not terminate it at Simcoe Street."

I'm certainly in agreement with this. I hope it works this time.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Pat Hoy: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in serving Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I pass it to page Oliver.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones's Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public input."

I obviously support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Simon.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I sign this petition in support and send it to the desk with Michael.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's important that we had a visitation today from the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, and this petition applies to that.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of" our beloved Oak Ridges moraine.

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Alexandra.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Pam Hillis from Strathroy, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Braden.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside of their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and the organizations that support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones's Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition in full support of its intent.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I'll sign this and send it along with page Holly.

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ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey"—my seatmate—"has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is either disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with the petition. I thank the Food for All Food Bank in Prescott for providing it to me, and I'll send it to the table with page Oliver.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure. I have another petition from a group of my constituents in the riding of Durham that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values;

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment"—he's here today—"revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared" immediately "until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the" adverse

"health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and give it to Holly Rose, one of the pages here on her second-last day.

OPPOSITION DAY

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS STRATEGY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, in recognition of the crisis that Ontario families are facing in finding mental heath and addictions treatment for their loved ones, particularly children, calls on the McGuinty government to table a mental health and addictions plan that reflects the recommendations made by the select committee, within 60 days.

It's addressed to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2. Debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: First, I want to thank the member for Whitby–Oshawa, our Ontario PC deputy leader and health critic, for bringing this important motion here today. It was her commitment to Ontario families that led to the creation of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in 2008. Together with the member for Dufferin–Caledon, on the other side of me, they helped produce a report on mental health and addictions that was unanimously approved by the Legislature this fall. I commend both of my colleagues for their outstanding leadership on this important issue.

The select committee then sat for 18 months. They heard from 200 concerned Ontario families and travelled from Thunder Bay to Windsor, Sioux Lookout to Ottawa and all places in between. The report made 23 recommendations to improve access to mental health and addiction services in Ontario, calling for, among other things: an assessment of acute care psychiatric beds for children and adults by region; that health care providers and staff are given proper tools to have a greater sensitivity of the mental health and addictions needs of their patients; and a task force to review Ontario's mental health legislation.

Let's consider why this is all important. Imagine being the parent of a teenaged girl who suffers from a mental illness like paranoid schizophrenia. She is prone to lashing out, becomes violent for no apparent reason and has become addicted to prescription drugs. Imagine that family struggling to find a way to navigate a system far too bureaucratic and filled with red tape to allow proper access to the care that their daughter desperately needs. You'd stay awake at night worrying that once she turns 19 years old there is no easy transition from youth to adult services; in fact, quite the opposite. You know, as a mom or dad, that there's a good chance she's going to struggle to find employment, to find housing, to find the health care that she needs. Sadly, the people who struggle with mental health and addictions issues often commit crimes to fuel their drug habits and end up in jail.

The facts are that mental illness is the strongest contributing factor in youth suicide. Sadly, in our province today, 110 children and youth commit suicide in Ontario each year.

Often those who suffer do so in silence, like Joey Votto of Etobicoke, who was forced to take time off baseball after suffering from depression following the sudden death of his father. He got the help he needed from friends and family and went on to become the 2010 National League MVP. And then there's Clara Hughes, who was living in Hamilton when depression nearly ended her Olympic dreams. But again, with support she was able to battle back. She became the only woman ever to win multiple medals in both the summer and winter games and is now tied for the most medals ever won by any Canadian. Both these success stories and the struggles of the families are the reason Ontario needs a real, thoughtful mental health and addictions plan.

The report on mental health and addictions was adopted by this House 168 days ago, yet it sits gathering dust in the Minister of Health's office. That is no way to show respect for the caregivers, the families and those who suffer far too often and far too long in silence.

Today we ask the McGuinty government to join the Ontario PC call for a real plan for mental health and addictions in Ontario. Families who face a crisis in finding help for their children and loved ones need a helping hand and they need relief. I look forward to support from the members opposite for the motion standing in the name of the member for Whitby–Oshawa to do the right thing and table a plan in this Legislature that reflects the recommendations made by the select committee, and to do it within 60 days.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the members of the select committee for the important work they did in developing their report. Most importantly, I want to thank the Ontarians who lent their voices, shared their experiences and gave the committee important insight into the needs of those with mental health challenges.

The select committee was established and at the time trumpeted as a non-partisan effort, an example of co-operation and collaboration working towards a common goal. But today we see that the Hudak-Harris Tories can't help but dismantle the spirit behind the intent of what was a non-partisan endeavour.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The members are well aware that addressing the issue by way of an opposition day motion is not in keeping with the traditions of this House which would allow for an issue to be profiled by all parties in a collaborative way. It appears that the opposition is now attempting to take credit for the shared efforts of the select committee.

Most appalling is that today we saw the flippant attitude by the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Simcoe North.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: —the attitude that he has towards individuals and families affected by addictions. To trivialize a serious disease in order to get a headline published demonstrated a lack of empathy and real understanding of a very serious issue. In fact, Pat Capponi, the lead facilitator of Voices from the Street and a psychiatric survivor, said, "The travesty of the Leader of the Opposition using the public meltdown of Charlie Sheen as a joke, when removing stigma remains a key challenge, demonstrates his lack of understanding of the issue and a lack of consideration for those who are suffering. We are not a joke," she said, "we are people, and we deserve better leadership, especially at this critical time."

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The opposition cannot, on the same day, try to take leadership on an important issue and at the same time further stigmatize people who are already struggling with addictions across the province.

Our government has come together to help those affected by mental health challenges through the extensive work that we have done and are doing to create a plan. Unlike the opposition, we will have one of those. The member for Whitby–Oshawa knows that we're working on a comprehensive, 10-year mental health and addictions strategy, for she was copied on a February 2 letter from my colleague the Honourable Deb Matthews, who updated her on a comprehensive plan.

In the letter, Minister Matthews explained that she, through her minister's advisory group, had heard from over 1,000 delegates to help guide the advice. In addition to this important work, my own ministry has completed a mapping exercise which provided information on needs, services, funding and wait times across the province—because our government believes in evidence-based policy.

We have an abundance of excellent information that's informing a complete, comprehensive, 10-year mental health and addictions strategy, and it is incredibly important that we get this right. It is our intention, as confirmed by both the Premier and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, that this strategy, which we intend to be both thoughtful, comprehensive and reflective of all the advice we have received, will be delivered this spring at the latest, not according to an arbitrary and obviously partisan motion.

The fact that the opposition want to force an arbitrary deadline on something that is so important further demonstrates their lack of commitment to men, women and, most importantly, children and families who are depending on the vital outcomes that this strategy will provide.

I can remember when the last PC government implemented a children's mental health funding freeze for their entire two terms of office. Our government is the first government in more than 20 years to actually demonstrate a commitment to enhancing child and youth mental health services. After so many years of neglect under the previous government, I'm proud to say that it's our government that provided two base funding increases, an additional $64 million. We now invest approximately $400 million for child and youth mental health. We also invested $5.9 million in the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health.

Children's health advocates acknowledge the progress we are making. Children's Mental Health Ontario recently wrote that our government has "shown a commitment to transform the child and youth mental health system in more fundamental ways that would improve accessibility and outcomes."

Our government knows that there is more to do to strengthen mental health and addiction supports for all Ontarians. We are committed to children, including those who are the most vulnerable. We are listening and will continue to listen to experts, front-line providers, parents and those with lived experience.

We look forward to sharing our plan, a plan that will reflect all that we have heard and that will reflect and build on some of the good works already under way in our province—like the doubled funding for the Ontario child and youth telepsychiatry program, which allows for over 1,400 consultations in rural communities; like the work we have funded by the Parents for Children's Mental Health and Kinark's family navigator pilot project, which will provide information and supports to parents; like the anti-stigma program across the province called The New Mentality, which engages youth to speak about mental health; and Working Together for Kids' Mental Health in four communities to help support professionals across sectors to better understand, effectively identify and appropriately respond to early mental health needs.

But we know that there is much more work to do to improve the lives of children and families facing mental health issues to provide them with the supports and services they need to live full and rich lives. I can tell you that on this side of the House, we have our sleeves rolled up and we are doing the work that needs to be done to make a real and meaningful difference in the lives of Ontario children and their families.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party. We are in full support of this motion by our colleagues from the Progressive Conservative Party, and in fact really celebrate the fact that the member from Whitby–Oshawa has brought this forward.

It's absolutely tragic what's happening in Ontario right now, particularly in light of this committee that did such good work and brought in 23 recommendations that have fallen on deaf ears on the government side. The government says they're working on it. They've had eight years, and they've had seven months since the com-

mittee gave its report. We're about eight weeks away from this House rising, for heaven's sake. When is the action going to happen? Clearly, it's going to be an election promise. We can see that one coming. But our children who suffer from mental health issues and addictions in our communities needed action eight years ago, and they're still waiting.

I recall a woman who came here as part of a group called the Tragically OHIP. They were talking about the plight of their children and the lack of ability for families to get help for their children. In her particular case, her daughter was suicidal and suffered from depression and addictions. Certainly, this is a common profile for many of our youth. This was a middle-class family who owned their house and didn't have a mortgage. By the end of the treatment spectrum for their daughter, they had a huge mortgage on their house because they had to send their daughter to a private facility to get treatment for her. That is a common story. There's really nothing in Ontario right now that would have filled her needs. This is tragic. There's one example.

Victim Services Toronto were here the other day asking why they haven't had a cost-of-living increase in 20 years. This is a front-line service that deals with victims of crimes and domestic abuse. Again, in 20 years, they haven't had a raise, and they're not going to get one from this government.

More to the point—and this is a point I want to make right up front—not only is this government not taking positive action; this is a government that is slashing the services we have, such as they are, which are pathetic to begin with in terms of the amount we could have and should have.

OPSEU was here yesterday. They held a press conference at Queen's Park, delivered through our leader, Andrea Horwath—stacks of cards asking the McGuinty government to walk the talk on mental health, because they know there's an epidemic of service cuts in mental health across the province.

Here are just some of the cuts to existing mental health services:

Ontario's only residential rehab program for children and youth, Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences in Whitby, is cutting 28 child and youth counsellors, under the watch of this government. This program has successfully treated children who have had between three and seven prior hospitalizations before ending up in Ontario Shores. These child and youth counsellor positions are essential, as you can imagine, to the well-being of their young clients.

In Sarnia, a 14-bed facility for girls is about to shut its doors.

Children's Mental Health Ontario represents more than 90 community-based mental health agencies. At pre-budget hearings, they told this government that parents are told they will have to wait 7.5 months, on average, for services. Can you imagine what that means in the life of a family? What family who has the means to do so is going to wait seven and a half months for services for a suicidal child—I'd love to hear an answer from this government.

Because of lack of funding, children's mental health agencies are expecting to lose the capacity to serve 2,000 children in the next year alone. That's under the watch of the McGuinty Liberal government.

We're not even talking about proactive, positive measures; we're talking about a government that's bringing in cuts to services.

Cuts to mental health services are also happening in London, in St. Thomas, in Brockville and in Toronto at CAMH.

This is dreadful. This is a state of emergency. This is appalling. This is immoral. This is unethical. This is a situation right now where children are suffering. One might even say that children may be dying because of the lack of care—7.5 months for children with addiction and mental health issues, with suicidal ideation and other problems? You know, we were hopeful, the New Democratic Party. We were hopeful when we saw for the first time, it seems to me—since I've been elected, anyway—a real all-party committee that travelled, that extensively held hearings; 18 months of work this committee put in.

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In this situation, where we're looking at cuts and we're looking at problems, we're looking at lack of coordination and other issues—and, of course, they heard from Ontarians across the province about the lack of services for their children and others with mental health and addiction issues. I'm going to talk about the others with whom I've had personal experience within my own riding of Parkdale–High Park. Some 18 months of work this committee did. We were extremely excited about the recommendations, all 23 of them, that the all-party committee agreed on. Yet what did we get? What did we get from this government? We got a little bit of action. We got Bill 101, the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act. But I have to tell you that even in this one case the work was rushed. It didn't consult with relevant stakeholders and it's left with many, many gaps in the supposed solution. I hear about them all the time from front-line workers. That's all they've done—that's all they've done. What about the other 22 recommendations? They didn't get that one right, but what about everything else that this committee looked at?

The Progressive Conservatives are absolutely correct: What about a timeline for you as government? What about a timeline for action on your own committee's recommendations? Was all that work for nothing? Imagine the taxpayers' dollars that went into travel time, time away. That could have been money spent for front-line services. That could have been money spent, and it should have been the groundwork for a government policy that acted on all 23 of those recommendations. In fact, in Parkdale–High Park we were very excited about it because we have our own Parkdale drug strategy program that's been bringing together front-line workers for those who have mental health and addiction issues for years now. We've been meeting. We've had educational

events. We've done, after Senator Kirby's impetus, five-cent-a-drink events. We've done a great deal, and mainly and mostly what we were hoping would happen is that we would upload, in a sense, some of the good work that had been done at the city of Toronto in looking at a response to addictions—and they have a four-pronged approach.

We were looking and hoping that this would be uploaded to the province because the province had no policy for addiction whatsoever. Of course, addictions and mental health are twin sisters, if you will. Then, when we saw the report, we thought that finally something was happening. In fact, I proudly brought in the committee's report with the recommendations to our Parkdale drug strategy. Around that table sat CAMH, St. Joe's, St. Christopher House, Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre and many, many others of our service providers. They were excited about it: 23 recommendations. They all felt this was extremely positive, a great step forward. Then they waited, and they waited, and they waited, and they're still waiting.

We're used to waiting in Parkdale–High Park because we've been waiting a long, long time. Remember, Parkdale is where, when the institutions were, in their words of the day, setting patients free, often with a prescription and no money, to go out into the community. Even now, we have front-line caregivers who say they don't even have enough beds for those who are serious suicide risks in my community. Anybody here who has ever worked in the field of mental health and addictions will know that that halcyon day sometimes comes in the life of somebody who has been severely addicted to drugs or alcohol when they say, "You know what? I want to get help. I want to stop this. I want to stop this downward spiral and I need help. I know I can't do it alone." Many of the homeless folk that I used to have in my church—we had a whole separate service for people with mental health and addictions issues, and many of them would say, "Okay, I'm ready." Then you get on the phone and try to find them a bed in a detox centre. If you were lucky enough to do that—and, trust me, there are precious few beds for women at all in any centre, but if you were lucky enough to find them that bed, then the next step is rehabilitation. Seven-month, eight-month waits, if we were lucky. Of course, if you have money, you can get immediate care, but for most people who've been on the spiral of addiction, either alcohol or drugs, they don't have the money to pay for private care. They need public care, and it isn't there. I can tell you it's not there, and it's certainly not there with immediacy.

You know what happens to most of them? I can tell you. I'm speaking on behalf of the 11th and 14th divisions right now in my ridings. I can tell you that the police become the front-line caregivers for those people, if you can call them that, and then a lot of those folk end up in prisons. I don't have the figures at my fingertips to tell you how much it costs to imprison someone every year, but I can tell you that this is not the compassionate response to mental health and addiction issues. That is what's happening: Most of those folk who are in a spiral, who end up homeless, end up doing petty crime, end up in emergency wards, end up in prisons—prisons that usually cost in excess of $40,000 to $50,000 a year to house them there. They don't get better; they get worse, and then they're out on the street again.

Even the police have told me, "We're sick of this. Where are the beds? Where's the rehabilitation? Where is the response of a compassionate, caring community to people who suffer from mental health and addictions issues? Why are we the front-line service response team for those who get themselves into serious trouble?" And I said, "We're making progress at Queen's Park. We had an all-party—truly all-party—committee that came out with some excellent recommendations," and they said, "Great. When are they going to be put into place?"

We waited and we waited and we're waiting, and what do we get? We get one small little bill that's badly, badly written, and that's had—and I can tell you in my community from some service providers—some pushback already. All those recommendations, 18 months, all that time, and this is all we get. No wonder the Progressive Conservative Party is giving a timeline to this government. No wonder, because lives are at stake here. Lives are at stake, like my friends whose daughter had to be sent out of province, but I can tell you that she's the lucky one because her parents had means. They could mortgage their house; they could send her away to a private facility that cost a fortune.

I can tell you that when you walk around the streets of Toronto, you will see the evidence of this government's inaction. You will see folks sleeping on grates. You will see people who are too frightened and too sick to go to shelters. They can't last there; they get beaten up, so they prefer to sleep on grates. If you go to any church in the downtown core you'll see out-of-the-cold programs; you'll see food banks. The numbers are hugely up. We now have more food banks in the GTA than McDonald's. This is the evidence of this government's inaction. You see deep cuts to those service providers that are still out there. You see people, like OPSEU here, asking for action and getting none. That's the reality of care, or lack of it, to those with problems.

I think of many who have lost their lives over the years, many whom my church worked with directly, one on one. Their names are important. They were real people. They had real lives. They had real stories, and they ended—and they needn't have; it was needless deaths—because, again, the facilities were not there. The facilities were not available, and the facilities are still not available.

I'm speaking of downtown Toronto. I'm not even speaking of the extreme lack of response in northern Ontario and the First Nations communities, where addiction rates are soaring. I'm not even talking about those. I'm talking about downtown, relatively wealthy Toronto, where even here you can't get the help you need if your child or your senior or anyone gets seriously ill in your family.

I'm going to leave some time for the member from Kenora–Rainy River, because I know that he will want to be part of this conversation, particularly talking about First Nations and the northern gap in care. But suffice to say, two points: Number one, we support this; of course we do. We wish it wasn't six months; it should be three months. They need to act in the next eight weeks actually, if we're going to get any action out of them.

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Also to say—and this is the important point—that not only is this government not acting on the 23 recommendations, but they're actually making cuts to services that we already have. Pathetic and small though they may be in terms of the immensity of the problem, this government is making cuts, and they know they are. OPSEU was here telling them they were, and provided lots and lots of evidence to that effect.

So please—I know they won't, but the plea goes out for all those families, for all of those individuals who suffer from mental health and addiction issues across the province, for all of those who can't get the care they need, for all of those who end up, more expensively—because this is, of course, penny-wise and pound-foolish again, which is what this government is famous for: Don't spend the money now, but spend the money later on prisons and the justice system and emergency care. Don't spend the money where it's really needed.

Please act on your own recommendations. Do it now. Don't make an election promise; we know how those go. Do it now, pass this, and get busy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Isn't it interesting? Isn't it interesting that after the Minister of Children and Youth Services speaks—and, quite frankly, I would be a little embarrassed if I was a Liberal after hearing her speak—not another Liberal member is willing to stand up on the record on this issue? I was really disappointed that the minister—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I was very disappointed that the minister chose to say, "We don't want a deadline." Why don't you want a deadline? What are you scared of? It's a very benign motion. It says that we want a plan. We're not calling for immediate action; we just want to see your plan. Sixty days—you've already said that you want to have something come forward this spring. Do the math. I don't understand what you're afraid of.

If you don't want to do it because it's a PC motion, do it for the families who have been waiting for services, do it for the families and the children, and those who are saying, "Not only do you not have any treatment options available, but we can't even assess your child for the next two years." Do it for them, because, quite frankly, when we were participating in the select committee, those are the families we heard from, and you know because there are members sitting across the aisle who were part of this select committee.

We were proud of this work. Every single word in this report was discussed, was debated and ultimately was agreed upon, so why are we so worried about a 60-day deadline? What is preventing you, other than, quite frankly, the pending election, that you won't table something that makes the families and children think you're actually going to do something about mental health and addictions services in Ontario? Plain and simple: Mental health services in Ontario are all across the board. The services you get depend on where you live. It's not right, it's not fair, and families are fed up. We need to start acting on some of these reports that have come forward.

Seven months ago, the select committee brought forward their report. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at that point said, "Wait. I want to see the ministerial advisory committee report." Fair enough. The ministerial advisory report—three months ago. You now have the reports, the access to the experts that you so desperately wanted before you made any reaction. Seven months, three months—how much more time do you need? We're simply asking for you to table your plan in the next 60 days.

Families don't know where to turn right now. They are at a loss. They saw some light when the select committee brought forward their report, and we talked about how it was all-party support. They saw some light when the ministerial advisory report came forward. Why can't we now say, "We have the information and we have the resources. Let's actually bring forward some action plans"? The wait-lists are too long and parents are frustrated.

As I said, the motion today is simple. Just table your plan—60 days. It's not an unreasonable request. We all need deadlines to make sure that we actually bring forward our plans and show people.

The minister's reaction, saying, "We don't want a deadline from the Progressive Conservatives," I find offensive. Fine; don't do it for the Progressive Conservatives. Do it for the families. Do it for the organizations—

Interjection: Do it for the children.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Do it for the children. It's time to stop stalling. It's so frustrating.

Here in Ontario, we have more individuals with mental health and addictions issues than we do with cancer and heart disease combined. Mental health and addictions issues need the same serious attention that we are giving to cancer and heart disease. Why are we treating them differently? Why are we always asking children and families who have mental health and addictions issues to stand at the back of the line? "Just wait; we'll get to you eventually." Well, you haven't. That's the frustration. That's why you see private companies like Bell stepping up with their campaign "Let's Talk."

It's time for government to actually step up and lead. We've seen the private industry do it. We've seen the families lobby together and share their stories—which, quite frankly, are very personal stories and I'm sure very challenging for them to share—with the committee, with the public, to make sure that the awareness is there and that the stigma starts to dissipate.

I don't understand. We have to stop making excuses as government, as legislators. We have an estimated 200,000 Ontarians suffering in silence who can't afford to wait any longer. We're not alone asking for a plan. We're not alone asking for action. Just do it, and do the right thing. We deserve it, the children of Ontario deserve it, and it's time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: This past Sunday, I was at the annual police communion breakfast, and the Lieutenant Governor, David Onley, spoke. He spoke about the critical need to start to pay more attention and to make sure that people with disabilities get the support they need. I spoke after him, and I was inspired by what the Lieutenant Governor said. I said, "You know, Lieutenant Governor, one of the groups in our society—amongst us in our families and neighbours, there's the hidden disability issue, where people with mental disabilities, mental challenges, are silent and are not visible. So we have got to understand that when we talk about people with challenges and disabilities, there are also those who suffer in silence, and those are the ones we've got to start to pay more attention to."

I just want to say that this is not about unions, it's not about pay raises and it's not about political parties and their motions. It's about—and I think a lot of members, in honesty, have said that. I do agree with you. There are, undeniably, heart-wrenching stories with families, children, elderly people. We all, as MPPs, see this. But I think it has to be understood that all of us have an obligation to start to pay incredibly more attention to this issue that, in our rushing-by days, we don't and we haven't.

Sure, it's the job of the opposition to push this government. The only thing I don't accept is—look, I sat here for eight years when the other party was in power. I can't remember one instance that this was ever raised in eight years. So, sure, you're not perfect—and remember that. We are trying our very level best to try to put some resources into it.

One member talked about cuts. I know that much more resources are needed. It would be endless. But I think we've doubled the amount of money since 2003 that we've put into helping people with disabilities—doubled the amount of money that has been invested in people. In 2003, there was $399 million paid for community mental health services; in this past year, there was $682 million—from $399 million to $682 million. This is another illustration of how difficult and—even with that extra resource, we know that we have to put in more.

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One member said, "Well, you just passed the narcotics bill, and you rushed it. You didn't put enough into it." Now all of a sudden we're saying, "Oh, you've got to rush this right away because we have got to get this before us." This is sort of talking out of both sides of your mouth.

This is two penetrating series of issues that we've got to deal with, and the complexity—the human complexity. It's not the union complexity. It's not the wages complexity. It's the families, the mothers and fathers who are 80 years old and have a 45-year-old mentally disabled child at home. It's still their child. How do you help that 45-year-old? How do you help the six-year-old? How do you help the people with language disabilities, people who are suffering multiple disabilities besides their mental disability?

The all-party committee did great work. We all know that. Let's keep going down that road that we're on, rather than starting to diverge into petty partisanship. Dare we do that?

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, you certainly do know about that.

So let us get this work done, as the minister said. There are many dedicated people in the vast variety of service providers. I know I have one great organization in my riding, Delisle Youth Services. They just opened up a new drop-in centre, as a result of a Trillium grant, at Yonge and Eglinton. There are incredible people who want to do this work. We are trying to do what is right for them. We are trying to do it in a comprehensive, lasting way that's not rushed and not piecemeal, but really works at the fundamental level of people—mothers, children, fathers, grandfathers—and not just unions and wages. Let's roll up our sleeves and work together on this critically human issue that we all have a responsibility to do something about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege to rise today to speak on a subject that is of such great importance to the people of Ontario, including in my riding of Leeds–Greenville. I can think of few issues in our society today that touch so many lives as mental health issues.

I have to say off the top that we are making progress in lifting the shroud of silence that for too long has kept those suffering with mental illness alone and in the dark. The outstanding work of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions was a major step forward, and I applaud all the members for their efforts. They set aside partisan differences because they recognized that the situation out there has to change when it comes to understanding, diagnosing and treating mental illness.

Yet despite all the work by the committee, it's clear that this government just doesn't get it. After all, today we're debating a motion by my colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa for one reason: The government has failed to grasp the opportunity by acting on the groundbreaking work of the committee. Seven months after the all-party committee tabled its report and the 23 critical recommendations in it, we still haven't seen a plan from the government opposite. I can't understand their reluctance.

Certainly, when I held a community mental health round table in my riding on October 15 of last year, the message from the 80-plus people in the room that day was that it was time to act on the committee's recom-

mendations. If ever we in this place were to question how big an issue mental health and addictions treatment in Ontario is right now, the turnout at my event certainly was a clear answer that we had better get moving. I was so proud to have two caucus colleagues, the member for Whitby–Oshawa and the member for Dufferin–Caledon, with me that day as we welcomed a cross-section of those on the front lines in mental health care in Leeds–Grenville. What we heard from people that day was that the system in place now to help those suffering from mental illness works not because of government and the support of government, but in spite of government.

Workers all across my riding, including those from my local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, are doing great things to treat those, but too many people are falling through the cracks. People are going undiagnosed and untreated. Yes, it's terrible in society. We're paying a price, but we need to get moving. We have to have some action from the Legislative Assembly.

With this motion, we're calling on the government to give them the support structure they need by coming up with a plan to implement those 23 recommendations. Quite simply, what my two colleagues who were in Brockville with me heard that day was that communities are already in crisis and we can't afford to let those recommendations in that report gather dust on the shelf.

For my part, the people in Leeds–Grenville, when it comes to mental health services, have been pretty lucky. We've had a long history of providing treatment. We've had a great facility, the Brockville Mental Health Centre, in our community. It has been there, as many people know, for more than a century. We're so concerned with what's happening in Brockville with some of the jobs that are being moved or left in limbo, some of the services that are being transferred to the facility, but I've sat and I've talked to officials of the South East LHIN and asked them to step up and ensure that those facilities and those programs are going to remain for those who are in need in my riding. Sadly, the LHIN has been silent on all of my requests.

Frankly, when it comes to the Brockville Mental Health Centre, we're not unique in terms of getting the cold shoulder from this government. In fact, I was looking at a recent Brockville Recorder and Times newspaper story from February 15, 2002. Mr. McGuinty was the opposition leader when he visited Brockville looking for votes. He was making all kinds of promises, including one to complete the correctional centre and forensic unit currently under construction at the Brockville Mental Health Centre: "I would honour both those commitments. I'm encouraging the government to get moving on these things." That's what he said. Like so many things with this Premier, he says one thing and does another. I know it's unparliamentary. I'd just love to use that "lie" word but I can't and I won't. I'll withdraw—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You will withdraw it. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: But you know what? It's not too late for him to save face. One of the many crises we're confronted with in mental health is the number of women in Ontario jails who suffer from a mental illness. A study found that just over 18% of the nearly 9,000 inmates in provincial jails had some psychiatric disorder. Another troubling statistic: Of the 575 female prisoners, a startling 31% were mentally ill. Unfortunately, the resources to treat them are out there, and that's why our community, led by Senator Bob Runciman, MP Gord Brown and myself, the chamber of commerce, the Brockville Mental Health Centre and OPSEU are all working together on this secure treatment centre for women. I'm calling on the government to do the right thing, to support our initiative, but more importantly, get moving on the select committee report.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise on this issue today, and to be honest with you, I'm of two minds. Any chance any of us have to talk about the work that needs to be done on mental health and addictions is an opportunity that we should seize, so I'm thankful that this issue is getting the debate, is getting extra debate time, that we're talking about it, because to be frank, as much as we like to go at each other as the opposition and the government and we like to criticize each other, nobody gets into heaven on the work that they've done in the past on mental health and addictions in Ontario. It's that simple. When we went out and talked to people around the province of Ontario—and I thank the members who served with me from all parties—people told us some pretty rotten stuff, those things that they dealt with on a daily basis.

We were able—for a few months anyway, for 18 months, maybe more—to set aside the partisan differences that often scar other issues, that often don't allow progress to take place on other issues. We were able to set that aside. So when this comes back, I guess it's the non-partisan experiment we had is meeting the harsh reality of partisan politics today. That's a shame, because I think what else came out of that exercise was that people not only liked what we did and what we came up with, they liked the way we conducted ourselves. In fact, if truth be known, I think they'd like this place to be conducted a lot more like the select committee was conducted. I think people felt that the input they provided was listened to, was acted upon, and what colour or what stripe you happen to be was simply not important.

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I really find that we're getting to a point in this where I'm still able to maintain a level of optimism because I know that the public expects us to conduct ourselves in the future on this issue the way that we conducted ourselves in the past.

Things are going the way that I anticipated they would go. I was Chair of the committee. I was able to table the report on behalf of the committee in the Legislature in the fall of last year. We knew we were going to get the report from the advisory committee around Christmas; I think it came in a week before Christmas. And we knew

that the Ministry of Health would then take both of those reports and come back with a plan in the spring. The minister, on numerous occasions, in public, has committed to do just that. Whether that happens on the 49th day or whether it happens on the 63rd day is really irrelevant to me. What I want to make sure is that it happens and that it happens in the spring of this year.

It seems to me that not one member of this House, I would hope, would be able to not support the motion, including or excluding the "within 60 days." I think the first part of the motion we have before us is supportable by anybody in this House. I think we've all said it ourselves. If there's a bright spot in this whole thing, this could be the first election in Ontario history where you've got three parties competing for the electorate's votes based on what they're going to do about mental health and addiction. That's got to be good for the field and that's got to be good for the province. More importantly, that's got to be good for the people who have dealt with these issues in silence for far, far too long under all three parties.

The finger-pointing that's going on, I'm not sure if it's needed. I know it's the way things are done around here but I'm not sure if it's a way things should be done in the future. You talk about people disengaging from government. I think the select committee not only offered some hope to the people who were dealing specifically with mental health and addictions issues; I think it offered some hope for the future of government as well.

I'm anticipating that the minister is going to honour her commitment to bring forward a plan that's based on the report that came out of our committee. I expect that she will do it this spring. She fully intends to do it this spring, as I understand it. Whether that's on June 3 or whether it's on May 20, I think that that's not really the argument for this House.

At the end of the day, what I think I will do is I will support this motion. Having said that, if the report comes back and it's a wonderful plan and it comes back on the 64th day, I won't lose any sleep that it came back on the 64th day. What I would lose sleep over is if we got a report issued or a plan issued that wasn't a substantial plan and wasn't a plan that was able to meet the needs of the people in the province of Ontario, who have told us that they won't tolerate this any longer.

I would ask all members to maybe keep in mind that what got us to this date wasn't partisan politics, it was working together, and I hope we can continue to do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I think we all realize we've got a motion here that all of us, in my view, can get behind: "to table a mental health and addictions plan that reflects the recommendations made by the select committee within 60 days."

Of course, it's incumbent again to recognize the hard work of this committee, pulling together so much research and information—years of research. There were 230 presenters and 300 submissions. The committee toured some facilities and put together 20 recommendations in what I consider quite a comprehensive report. We're asking government to respond to these recommendations and stressing the importance of a comprehensive mental health and addictions approach for Ontario.

Just before Christmas I attended a Trillium announcement in my area. It was a little over $62,000 for the creation of a fundraiser, a coordinator for our local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. It impressed on me, just within the riding I represent, the intricate web of addictions and mental health services and drug-related programming that is available and is also very confusing for people who need these kinds of services. As the committee pointed out, one of the main problems of Ontario's mental health and addictions system is that there is, in fact, no coherent system. We do know there is a tangled web of services. There's 10 different ministries involved, 440 services for children's mental health, 330 for adult mental health or community mental health, 150 substance abuse treatment agencies and 50 problem gambling centres.

I know that because I was involved in setting up a lot of these programs. I spent 20 years in this business, in treatment service development, specifically with addictions alone. Unfortunately, people fall through the cracks. They have trouble figuring it out. They don't have access to adequate assessment, referral or coordination. They get frustrated and give up. They can't navigate this kind of a system.

There is a solution coming from the committee: Put together an umbrella organization; Mental Health and Addictions Ontario is the name that's been given to it. Again, having spent 20 years in this business with an organization that's now called the Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health—at that time, I was on the addictions wing with the Addiction Research Foundation over here at 33 Russell Street. I was just on Russell Street this afternoon. I can tell you that during those 20 years, as a research organization we tried just about everything.

Reflecting on those years, what I feel is of uppermost importance in this field, and specifically the addictions field, is prevention: disease prevention, health promotion. It's cheaper than treatment. Treatment is reactive. Treatment can be an endless money pit. It's very important, in my view, to take that position. It's difficult to push that in a Ministry of Health, for example, or a ministry of illness that focuses on treatment and focuses on illness. I think maybe 1% goes towards prevention.

So I commend the work. I stress the approach of prevention. Get out in front of this rather than cleaning up the mess afterwards. If this government doesn't do anything about it, I'm pretty sure the next government will.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm privileged and honoured to enter the debate about a very important issue: mental health and addiction.

First, before I start, I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Oakville for his leadership in

this matter. I had the privilege and honour to go with him a few months back to an event at the London Convention Centre. There was a convention about mental health and addiction, and he was the keynote speaker. I listened to his speech. It was an amazing speech. Many people applauded him and came and talked to him about this issue, about his findings and the committee's findings.

I know this shouldn't be a partisan issue, and I'm saddened to see the opposition parties using this platform to attack the government and use it as a political wedge and also engage the vulnerable people among us in society in this political debate.

In 2003, before I got elected, when I was running for office back then, I remember the ex-leader of the Liberal opposition, Mrs. McLeod, came to London. We went to a mental health and addiction centre and talked about this issue because it was very important to us. I believe the head of the centre back then asked us to release a report that the Conservative government refused to release and was holding on to. When we got elected, we went back to the very same place with the report. I remember that the head of the place brought a huge box of ice and he started breaking the ice. That was what he wanted. That was symbolic to us. It was a good introduction to deal with mental health issues and addiction in the province of Ontario by releasing the report, which means we were breaking the ice between us and all these agencies across the province of Ontario who had been struggling for a long time to deal with mental health issues.

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I still remember, when I was outside this place, a party member who was a minister back then—his solution for the homeless and mentally ill and addicted people on the streets of Toronto and many places across the province of Ontario was for them to be jailed. That's a solution the Conservative Party had in their minds.

This issue is very important to all of us. Let's continue to work together.

I want to commend Mr. Caplan. When he was Minister of Health, he formed a committee to bring all the members from across this place to work together in a non-partisan way to find a solution, to go out to the public, to stakeholders, to specialists across the province of Ontario to find a solution.

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: When the honourable member was speaking, I never said a word. I hope she listens to me.

This is an important issue to me and to all the people in this place—to have a constructive debate. In the end, we're looking for solutions; we're looking for a way to help the vulnerable people among us. We need to help the vulnerable people, the mentally ill and addicted, in the province of Ontario. Our duty as elected officials in this place is to find a permanent solution, not just an overnight solution. That's why the debate is taking place: to have more discussion, because in the end it's our duty and obligation as citizens and elected officials to find a solution for the vulnerable people among us. Again, I'm sad to see this issue come to this House in a partisan way and as a platform to have the opposition attacking the government and holding them hostage—according to them, in order to release the support tomorrow.

As my colleague Mr. Colle clearly said a few minutes ago, when we came with a bill about drug addiction, they said that we were rushing the bill and that we should study it more and we should do more. Now, when we talk about very important issues, they want it yesterday, not today. We want it not yesterday; we want it a year ago and years before.

It's important to us to find solutions for all the people. It's important to have all the people working together to find a permanent solution, beyond the politics.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm happy to take part in the debate today with respect to this very serious issue, but I find it regrettable that some of the comments that are coming from the members opposite are taking away from the real issue, which is mental health and addictions.

Although mental illness and addiction surrounds us, it remains, for the most part, an invisible issue. We're all aware that it exists, yet almost nothing is being done to address the needs of those suffering from a mental illness or struggling with an addiction.

The province of Ontario is in dire need of improving and ensuring that mental health and addiction services are available to families when they are needed. Sadly, that is not what we have today. Instead, we see families struggling to find care for a loved one, even a child, often just to be placed on a wait-list. Mental health and addiction is all too often the skeleton in the closet, and we have an opportunity to act, in a realistic way, on the recommendations of a very important report.

Here are some disturbing facts: One in five Canadians will experience a mental health illness during their lifetime—that's roughly 500,000 youth—and of these, only one in four will actually get the help they need.

Here's the reality: Mental illness affects everyone. Everyone either knows someone who has a mental illness or may themselves have experienced some form of mental illness in their life. It's time for society to release those seeking help from their perceived shame on these issues.

On December 4, 2008, my colleague the member from Whitby–Oshawa took an enormous step forward in addressing the stigma that surrounds mental illness and addiction. She introduced a resolution to strike an all-party select committee to develop a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy for Ontario. As we know, the resolution did receive unanimous consent, and so the committee began its work. And on August 26, 2010, after tireless hours of work, this select committee released their final report. The report confirmed what mental health experts and stakeholders have been saying for years: that many people fall through the cracks or simply give up looking for help because of the complexity of the current system.

Currently, about 10,000 of our youth are waiting for mental health services. It's immoral to deny these people the help they need when they muster the courage to finally request it. We need to really think about what is happening while these individuals helplessly wait for help that they desperately need, often without hope of receiving it. The wait is actually increasing the severity of their mental illness, because they feel like there's no one out there who cares. They feel isolated.

According to Children's Mental Health Ontario, it takes about six months before 90% of the children and youth identified as suffering are eligible for treatment. Do you know how much a person's situation can deteriorate in six months? We're talking about a person getting the support they need right at the beginning, at a relatively low cost, and comparing it to the potential escalated crisis, maybe even hospitalization, and obviously at a much greater cost. There is a great human cost and a financial cost to doing nothing.

I talk about cost because we all know that our current health care system is unsustainable, and we need to ensure that we do everything possible to keep costs at bay. Prevention and early intervention certainly adhere to this. Our health care professionals and volunteers are stretched to the limit on this issue.

The report recommended the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, which would be responsible for the planning, coordination and delivery of mental health and addictions services. Under the current system, mental health and addictions are funded and provided by at least 10 different ministries. Addictions programs are especially scarce in Ontario, with most Ontarians having to seek rehabilitation programs outside of our province. This is, of course, not only inconvenient for those who want to support their loved ones at a challenging time and can't do it, but it's also extremely costly and it's often accompanied by long wait-lists.

You simply cannot release a report and give Ontarians who have been waiting for support the hope that change is coming and then do nothing. There are recommendations from the committee's work that should have been implemented by now, that come with little or no cost. I know the government is working on a 10-year comprehensive strategy, but this government has the opportunity to make mental illness visible instead of invisible right now, and that's absolutely the right thing to do.

I sincerely hope that this 10-year plan won't just reiterate the current problems but that it will actually take steps to change them. And I don't mean years from now; I mean immediately. Ontarians with mental illness have been waiting far too long, and they simply should not have to wait any longer. This is a matter of life and death.

I applaud the committee. They set aside their party politics to develop this report, and I encourage the members opposite to once again park their politics at the door and support this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to take part in this debate for a number of reasons. But let me start by addressing some of the comments from some of the Liberal members opposite, who seem to feel that if you bring a resolution calling upon the government to state its program or state its plan, somehow this is terrible partisan politics. Well, the last time I checked, governments are elected to govern. Governments are elected to make decisions. Governments are elected to put forward a plan.

1700

The select committee that did this work did incredible work. They really did first-class work in going across this province. They put together a very good report, a report that is detailed, that is thoughtful, that has a sense of history to it and also a sense of vision to it. I think the people of Ontario rightfully expect that something is going to happen from this report, and that's what this resolution is asking for. Having done all of this good work, having gone to community after community, having spoken to some of the people in this province who are the most underserved, the most neglected and, in many cases, the most forgotten, I think there's an onus this government to do something with that.

It's one thing to pat yourself on the back for the production of a good report; it's another thing totally to do something about it. This resolution is asking for this government to finally do something.

I want to speak from the perspective of a particular group of people. I want to speak, first of all, from the perspective of the people in northern Ontario because, probably, no part of the province is more underserved in terms of mental health services than the communities and the people across northern Ontario. Routinely, children from my constituency who need to access mental health services are told, "Well, you'll have to go to Winnipeg for that"—routinely, that happens. Many, many communities simply are not served, or, if children are served, it's sort of an adjunct to something else that a social service agency does. Treatment centres that are here in southern Ontario are not found in my part of the province; they just don't exist. The search for children's psychiatric services or the search even, in some cases, for mental health counsellors is something that will take you four or five hours' travel to even access the most basic of services.

In a province that pats itself on the back and is constantly talking about how well off and wealthy it is, I think most of us would regard that as a travesty, that those kinds of services aren't available in the context of all of the patting on the back and the thumping of the chest. But that is the reality, and that reality is unacceptable.

I think what members are saying is that it's unacceptable for this Legislature to strike a special committee, for that committee to go out and do the research work, come back and present a detailed, thoughtful report, and next to nothing happens with it. Alas, that is the situation we're in.

The only thing we've seen from the government so far is something which speaks to a small sliver of what was

contained in the report—a very small sliver. That small sliver continues to leave out some of the people who are most in need of services. Really, what the government has presented so far is their legislation and their plan dealing with those people who are addicted to certain forms of prescription medicine.

But the plan—even that small sliver—almost totally leaves out aboriginal people in the province, and let me tell you, there is a very, very, very serious addiction problem in a great number of First Nations in this province. For this government to present what it calls a plan to deal with the addiction to prescription medicines but then leave First Nations totally out of that equation is unacceptable as well—totally unacceptable.

The sadness of this is that this problem, in some First Nation communities, is of a crisis proportion: communities that do not have access to addiction programs, communities that don't have access to addiction counselling, communities that don't have access to detox programs, and communities that do not have access to any of the follow-up mental health services that would be part of a strategy of combating the addiction to prescription medicines. First Nations have none of those—none of them. It's not that they have a bit here, a bit there; they have none of them.

Yet when this government brought forward its approach—and I was here the day the minister stood and said, "Oh, this is wonderful and we're really going to respond to the report"—I could not believe that aboriginal people were totally left out of the government's response. It's almost as if some of those aboriginal communities, in this government's mind, are not Ontario citizens. It's almost as if this government thinks that "Ontario citizens" excludes First Nations. As far as I can tell, most of the First Nations were here first, long before us. If we're talking about long-standing citizens, the First Nations are the longest-standing citizens in this province. And the issue for First Nation communities is absolutely critical.

Now, I know someone actually approached the minister of native affairs with this, and his response was, "Well, that's a federal responsibility." The federal government may have some responsibilities, but it just seems to me outrageous that this government would claim to have a strategy, a response to people's addiction to prescription medicine, and then totally leave out First Nation communities, where the addiction is more severe and more serious than anywhere else. For the life of me, I just cannot figure out what the defence of that could be or how you could defend that position.

I want to give credit to a number of First Nations who, since the government presented its response, its plan to deal with addiction to prescription medicine, have come forward—some might say have had the audacity to come forward—to suggest what needs to happen. First of all, they say, the prescription medicine that First Nation peoples are addicted to—if they're from Fort Hope First Nation or from Neskantaga First Nation or from Summer Beaver First Nation or Round Lake First Nation or Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, one of the things that chiefs and councils all point out is that the prescription drugs aren't manufactured in the community. No; the prescription drugs come from outside, and they come from outside in a very well organized, well orchestrated program. The chief of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug has said, "Look, we know from what we've been able to see that there is a very organized crime operation in Thunder Bay that works very hard, first of all, to get people in our First Nations addicted, and then secondly to provide the funnel of drugs into the community." They also believe that there's an organized crime element in Winnipeg that is part of that as well.

But their point is that since this problem doesn't originate from within the First Nation community, this problem originates from other urban centres in Ontario, it's just wrong for this government to say, "Ah, but Ontario has no responsibility to those First Nations where people are addicted to prescription medicine." When the problem originates from outside the community and is shipped into the First Nation, how can the government of the province say, "Ah, but there's no responsibility to First Nations people"?

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The other thing that First Nations have pointed out is that in most cases, in most of these First Nation communities, their basic primary health service consists of a nursing station. There might be three or four nurses in the nursing station to, say, serve a First Nation community of 1,000 people. One or two of the nurses will be dealing with acute care issues. One might be dealing with public health issues and one might be able to devote some of his or her time to issues like addiction or community mental health. But one nurse working part-time in that field cannot possibly address these kinds of addiction services. That nursing station, I repeat again, has no access to detox services, has no access to follow-up mental health services, has no access to follow-up counselling and support services, none of those things.

Some communities with very, very limited resources are doing the very best they can to interdict the supply of prescription narcotics before they get into the community. They spend their own limited funds appointing special constables, performing searches at the First Nation airport when planes land or performing searches on the winter roads when the winter roads are operating. They get no funding from Ontario for this—none. They're on their own. In many cases they're using volunteer resources.

In Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, which is a community that has put together something of a treatment program, a limited treatment program, they get no funds from the province—nothing. They use the limited resources that are available from their nursing station. They work with Tikinagan Child and Family Services. They work with Nodin Counselling Services. And they string together as best they can, with their own resources, a very limited residential program to help individuals who are addicted kick the addiction, and then follow up from there.

When I was in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug just a few short weeks ago, the point they made is they do not have any resources for follow-up support, for follow-up counselling, for those people who are courageous enough to come forward and say, "I'm addicted; I want to go through the residential program; I want to kick the addiction, but I need help in the follow-up." They have no follow-up resources, they have no counselling resources and no support resources. They get absolutely zero health funding from the province.

Maybe this government thinks it can ignore this problem because First Nations people will just be stuck on the reserve. Well, let me tell you, that isn't happening. Just today in this Legislature, there were representatives of the United Native Friendship Centre here talking to various members of this Legislature. They made a point, the point being that the majority of aboriginal people now either live in towns or cities or are moving to towns and cities. If someone is addicted to prescription medicine and they come from Round Lake, or they're addicted to prescription medicine and they come from Fort Hope or they come from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, they don't leave their addiction in the First Nation when they move to Thunder Bay or when they move to Red Lake or Dryden or Sioux Lookout, or when they move to Toronto. They don't leave their addiction. They bring their addiction with them.

This thinking that the province can announce—and again, this was just a small sliver of the report on mental health and addictions—a small sliver of a plan to deal with and to address addiction to prescription medicine and then leave the First Nations of Ontario completely out of that strategy is really short-sighted thinking—really short-sighted thinking.

As I spoke to representatives of the United Native Friendship Centre today, they were very clear. They said, "Look, this problem may be serious on reserve. It is becoming more serious off reserve." People who cannot get services on reserve are going to, in one way or another, come to urban centres, only there it's probably going to be more expensive and more difficult to arrange to provide services because the services that are available very often are not culturally appropriate or, frankly, geographically available to First Nations when they're forced to move to Thunder Bay, Kenora, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Sudbury or Toronto. When people do move to the urban centre, they very often feel cut off from whatever the formal strategy or formal service plan is in that urban setting.

One of the reasons I'm going to support this resolution is because what the government has presented so far is grossly inadequate—grossly, grossly inadequate—and is unbelievably inadequate in terms of the First Nation peoples of this province and in no way can be defended by this government.

So what needs to happen? Again, just dealing with that small sliver of addiction to prescription medicines, not dealing, for example, with the issue of FASD, which is another serious addiction problem which creates all sorts of downstream health and social issues, but just dealing with that issue of prescription medicine and the addiction to prescription medicine, it seems to me that this province has to put together a strategy which includes First Nation peoples. This province has to pay attention to that.

I suggested earlier that one of the issues has to have a law enforcement aspect to it. It is far too easy for organized crime in a very organized, strategic and manipulative way to transport prescription medicines, drugs—OxyContin, Percocet—into remote First Nation communities and entice people into addiction and then feed that addiction. The law enforcement resources aren't there. That needs to happen. It may require some real thought on the part of the Attorney General and lawyers at the Attorney General as to how to do that effectively. That's the first part.

The second part: We need to see some actual treatment programs established. I would say to the Minister of Health and some of the other government ministers, you might want to go to Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and see what that community has been able to do, what that First Nation has been able to do with very limited financial resources and absolutely no help from the province. It might serve as a very good example of what could be done and what approaches could be taken. I'd say that the Minister of Health should have gotten there yesterday to look at that.

The third thing that needs to happen is, very simply, First Nations like Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, which are doing some of the work, which have taken leadership, need some support and finances so they can provide the follow-up services.

It's wonderful for someone to have the courage to come forward and say, "I am addicted to Percocet. I am addicted to prescription narcotics." That takes huge courage for someone to do that, and then it takes incredible courage and stamina for someone to go through a residential program which involves all the pain of withdrawal. But that is for naught if communities don't have access to the follow-up mental health counselling services and the follow-up counselling services. The Minister of Health, and I think the Minister of Community and Social Services, would do well to go to a community like Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and look at what the need is.

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We're not talking about vast sums of money here. We're talking about communities that are doing it on their own now with very limited funding. All they need is a little help to bring this to a successful conclusion.

The third part of this that I think needs to happen—and again, I'm just talking about the addiction to prescription medicines like Percocet. The next part that needs to happen, in my view, is that government's got to look at what are the social conditions, what is the lack of overall mental health conditions in communities that drive people, that situate people such that they could become addicted. Why is there an over-prescription of these kinds of medicines? Where is the over-prescription

that allows organized crime to literally ship in huge quantities of these prescription narcotics into some of the most vulnerable communities. How is that happening? It seems to seems to me that some very basic work needs to be done there.

That is just one small sliver of the report, but that small sliver that the government has announced is very inadequate by anybody's estimation and that's why I will be supporting this resolution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I certainly am pleased to rise today to talk about the motion brought by the member for Whitby–Oshawa, though I must say I am disappointed that we're doing it in the form of an opposition day motion. As a member of the select committee, I will say quite sincerely that the 18 months that we spent as a committee, an all-party committee, was probably what I consider the most important work that I've done in this Legislature since I was elected in 2007. The non-partisan aspect of our deliberations was something that was of great importance to me.

As a physician, when I was practising, I used to have Monday morning in the emergency room at Women's College. Year in, year out, I saw many people suffering from mental illness, I saw many overdoses, I saw attempted suicides, but I had always seen the issue from a somewhat detached medical point of view. The experience of being on the select committee was, of course, completely different. We heard the points of view from survivors, from families; it was incredibly moving for all of us.

I'd like to commend, first of all, the former Minister of Health, the member for Don Valley East, for in fact putting our committee together. I think we all know that that was a private member's resolution from the member for Whitby–Oshawa. It was accepted by our government. The members of the committee from the Liberal caucus—some of them are not able to speak today but we, each and every one, contributed with heart and mind to the ultimate ability.

So the member for Oakville, our Chair, the members for Guelph, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Scarborough–Rouge River, Peterborough and myself from the Liberal side contributed to the very best of our ability, as did the members for Whitby–Oshawa, Dufferin–Caledon and Nickel Belt. I don't doubt their sincerity in wanting to see our 23 recommendations being moved forward and I share that. I'll certainly be supporting this motion.

But I do have to say that I do doubt the sincerity of their leader. When we hear from the Leader of the Opposition during question period a remark on someone who is clearly in a disturbed mental state, treating that individual's addiction as a joke, I feel very disheartened. This is certainly making a partisan issue of one that should not be partisan. So I was interested to hear that in fact David Kelly, the executive director of the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs, has said since that incident this morning, "The negative impact on children and families in Ontario from substance misuse and addictions requires all of us to come together and address this health issue as opposed to trivializing the struggles of people who live with this disease every day. Ontario is a stronger, healthier and more productive place when we can help people and families cope with substance misuse." I certainly agree with Mr. Kelly, and I would have hoped that we could continue in this spirit in this place.

There certainly were alternatives to bringing an opposition day motion forward, a resolution. I know that the member for Whitby–Oshawa is anxious to see our government's plan. I have every reason to believe that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has been working very, very hard on that particular plan, and there is a commitment that a plan will be brought forward this spring.

I think it was the member for Haldimand–Norfolk who listed how many ministries are actually involved in mental health and addictions issues in this province, and there are at least 10. Our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care clearly needs to consult in moving forward with not only those 10 ministries but all the multiple stakeholders, because we want to get this plan right. We've been criticized that we acted too fast on one aspect of our recommendations, and we are now concerned that we will ensure that the rest of the plan is comprehensive and will be an excellent plan when implemented.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure today to stand and listen to the various approaches to this opposition day motion calling for action on an important issue. I want to thank, also, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. I have great respect for her as a physician, and also, she has recognized the work of all the members on this select committee. Having worked in the past on select committees, I know what thorough and rewarding work can result.

I guess it's good to focus on what we're trying to achieve, and I think remarks that aren't always helpful—some of it we act out in opposition and in government to put things on the record that stake out territory, stake out ownership. And in the spirit of the member from Whitby–Oshawa—I know her to be very kind-hearted. Her initial motion in the first place that put this issue on the table came from that spirit. I know the work she has done in our community, and I'm not just here as a cheerleader for Christine. I just know that she means sincerely what she says and does want action. Let's leave it at that and let those words speak for themselves.

I can only say that when I look at the work that's been done by many over the years—I remember some years ago reading a very profound article by Dr. Kirby when he issued the report Out of the Shadows at Last. I sort of followed it, because in each of our families—it's almost like a cancer—all of us have some contact, directly or indirectly, with persons who suffer from chronic disease of whatever sort, and we recognize mental health as just

one more of those issues that has not been given the proper attention. I think we all agree with the fact, as Out of the Shadows at Last implies, that it has been a shadow on all of us really.

Much has been studied—and I liked the comment from one of the participants who is here today. Sarah Cannon is here, and she is the executive director of Parents for Children's Mental Health, as well as Chris Bovie who is here from Ontario Shores. Thank you for joining us and listening to the most sincere debate that you'll often hear on these opposition day motions. It gets consistent attention in a very open forum.

Sarah Cannon's remarks were, "This crisis has been studied and solutions identified. It is time now for the provincial government to act on its own recommendations." I attribute this to Sarah Cannon, as I said before.

I want to thank my legislative intern, Charles Thomson, in the OLIP program. I gave him the task to quickly educate me on a couple of issues this week, and I commend him for the excellent work he's done. He's a young, enthusiastic graduate student of some sort when he completes. He pointed out a couple of studies to me which I think are very pertinent to the discussion.

1730

I just think in my own community, as each of us do, of stories we've heard and people we've met and touched to some extent or been able to help. This article is from a report addressing integration and mental health addictions.

I often think clearly of Ralph Price, who's deceased, but he was a doctor in Blackstock. He was a very kind and compassionate physician who often dealt with pain and pain management and the consequent addictions.

This report here says, "Currently in Ontario, there is no provincial strategy or framework to guide this process of mental health and addiction integration. There is uncertainty about what integration should look like and how it should be achieved. That is why our organizations recommend a provincial policy framework to guide the integration of mental health and addiction services." I could go on.

There's another report here, the 10-year study from the ministry—10 years. It's Respect, Recovery, Resilience. This is another attempt, in this climate of an election year—that's the reality. There's been an 18-month study, there are 23 very genuine, well-supported, unanimous recommendations, and it's time for action. Yes, there are sidebar debates on this. I understand that. But the important thing is, it is a call to action, and action in a climate where pretty soon this House won't be sitting. There will be a budget in March, hopefully, and the budget will claim that there's not enough money to do anything except the high election issues.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not being partisan here. Member from Northumberland–Quinte West, listening is the better part of learning.

All I'm saying is that really what you have to do here is realize that if it's not in the budget in March, there's not a nickel more for those vulnerable individuals and families. That's the plain story here. After that, it will be political rollout time for pre-election announcements which aren't helpful.

This 10-year plan takes you through three elections, the current government and two additional governments. The time to act is now.

When I look in my riding at the good work being done by front-line physicians, there's a very interesting article by Jillian Follert in recent Durham region media. It's called "The Doctor is in at Oshawa Homeless Outreach Centre." It's about the Gate 3:16 centre, which deals with street people, vulnerable people, often people with addiction issues, and the very uncomfortable way they have had to live because they've fallen off all of the caring lists. This doctor, I think, is to be commended.

"Dr. Vincent Ho is getting ready to see his first patient of the day.

"But instead of walking into an exam room at his practice in Bowmanville, the family physician is at a homeless outreach centre in Oshawa." That's what the front-line people are doing.

It goes on to say, "Despite Canada's universal healthcare system ... family doctors aren't accessible" for many times of the day.

The article goes on to say, "It's also common for Gate clients to be without a health card or other identification, because it's been lost or stolen," or simply misplaced. "The ability to drive or take transit to a doctor's office"—the hard-to-serve people is what we're talking about.

What we're asking for is action. So I thank Ms. Elliott and others for the work they've done. I look forward to the vote today to allow that to move forward and do the right thing for vulnerable people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate this afternoon. I can say at the outset that one of the most positive experiences that I've had in my public life was the opportunity to sit on this select committee, tour Ontario and visit many communities to hear some very brave testimonies about mental illness and addictions.

I want to talk a little bit about a personal thing: my own father, who died at age 63 because of alcoholism. I think one of the things that assisted me was certainly the very brave people who came forward. Now, many years later, I can finally talk about this, and I did take the inspiration from many of those people who came before us at the select committee.

People know that my son is now serving as a page. He never got an opportunity in his life to meet his grandfather, so now it's my story to him, and those pictures, and we can finally as a family, I think, take the time to talk about this.

Certainly the other visit we made was to Sandy Lake. Sandy Lake is a very isolated First Nations community in northwestern Ontario. To hear the account that 85% of the population in Sandy Lake is addicted to Percocet and OxyContin and to see the tragedy and the lack of hope

and opportunity is something that, through the recommendations of the select committee, I'm hoping we can do something about.

This is a little like building this block by block by block. We have good examples in Ontario of issues that have been addressed by having governments of all political stripes build on a continuous basis. I think of the strategy for cancer care in this province. I think of our cardiac care strategy in this province. I think of our strategy for diabetes. We're doing that, as I said; building it on a block-by-block basis. I think it's very important that we do build our strategy for mental health care in the province of Ontario, not in haste but through a thoughtful consultative process to make sure that we get this right. It's critically important that we do that.

I want to raise another family that went through the tragic experience of having their daughter commit suicide last November. This little girl's name is Daron Richardson, and the reason I know about this case is that her father is Luke Richardson. Luke Richardson is an assistant coach with the Ottawa Senators but played his junior hockey in Peterborough with the Peterborough Petes. Luke Richardson and his wife have had to bear what—I don't know how a family can do it. I have a picture of their daughter with me here today, a remarkable young girl, 14 years, and now Luke Richardson and his wife have taken it upon themselves—in fact, in February in a game between the Ottawa Senators and the Philadelphia Flyers, they started the purple decal campaign with scarves and decals to promote a youth mental health awareness campaign for everybody throughout the province of Ontario. This is to bring about interventions, particularly for young people in Ontario who find themselves challenged with these issues and how we can help them. Through the Ottawa Senators Foundation and the Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health, the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the Canadian Mental Health Association, they're coming together to put those dollars for mental health.

Indeed, I intend to support this resolution this afternoon. I think it's a very important resolution and certainly provides a framework to go forward. Having said that, I know our colleague, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Deb Matthews, is certainly very aware and wants to make sure that we have a comprehensive policy in place to meet the needs of mental health in this province.

Having said those few words, I want to thank my colleagues this afternoon for giving me the opportunity to participate in what I consider one of the most important debates that we've had around here in the last little while.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a moment in which to make a couple of comments.

First of all, I want to say how proud I was of the initiative of this Legislature to take on the role of a select committee and the work that it has done. Today, what we are looking at is a request for a plan.

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When I see the wording of this resolution, it reminds me of the sense of urgency that accompanied the people who came to visit me two weeks ago, three organizations in York region who provide children's mental health services. Their plea to me was simply to convey the urgency that they feel as providers of care in York region. York region has always been underserviced and so they have battled with that, but they also need desperately the kind of recommendations to come to fruition that are in this report.

It's an opportunity for me to convey to you that sense of urgency that exists, frankly, across the province, not just in York region.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: For many of us on this side of the House, this is a very personal and highly motivated piece of legislation. I want to thank all the people who were involved in it.

I foster parented and adopted children. My son is a rather remarkable young man who worked through his whole life dealing with a rather complex family. Having a gay dad, he ran into a lot of homophobia and some very difficult things, given the communities that we grew up in, but he struggled with fetal alcohol syndrome his whole life, which he was born with.

Sometimes I think that we sometimes misrepresent each other's words and views here in ways that I find very hurtful and very detrimental. Mental health issues are pretty critical, and I'm sad in the sense that this motion is here today, while I'm going to support it, because I think this was above politics until it became an opposition day motion, because I don't think we need to be reminded of the importance of this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to offer some concluding comments on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus with respect to today's motion. I am very appreciative of the comments that have been made, particularly by my fellow members of the select committee: the member from Oakville, the member from Peterborough and the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I, too, find it regrettable that this is being brought in the form of an opposition day motion. It's not meant to be a divisive issue or a partisan issue. The fact of the matter simply is that there aren't that many opportunities for us to be able to discuss this issue in the Legislature, and that's why we're bringing it forward.

I have tremendous respect and admiration for my fellow members of the committee, and I agree with them in that I think, probably, the greatest contribution that I have been able to make to this place in the five years that I have been here is the work that I did do on the select committee.

As the member from Dufferin–Caledon indicated, this was something that we all spent our time on. This wasn't

something where we just listened to people and then we gave the report off to somebody else to write. Every single member of this committee wrote every single word of this report, and I'm proud of it, and I know that my fellow committee members are.

If you look, really, at the impetus for this motion today, I would really like to refer to the report and just read a paragraph from the introduction that states the case for today's motion. It says:

"The select committee held a frank discussion about the fact that it often takes a crisis to accomplish a major social or political change. We are convinced that this crisis has arrived. However, it is one suffered silently, as those experiencing a mental illness or addiction are ignored, stigmatized and lack the social power to demand change. These individuals are expecting us to finally take action. We, in turn, expect our recommendations to be adopted. We strongly encourage the Legislature to endorse our recommendations and advocate for their implementation."

In fact, that's all this motion was intended to achieve; nothing more and nothing less. I would say that some of the things that we're seeing that are happening out in the community—by business; by the tremendous work that companies like Bell Canada have done, with their "Let's Talk" campaign with Clara Hughes; by the Royal Bank of Canada coming forward and endorsing children's mental health.

The community is already stepping up to the challenge. We need to step up to that challenge as a government. Yes, I am a little bit impatient; I have to say I am, because we have a serious crisis right now. We've got children in crisis. The rate of not just teenage suicide, but suicide among children as young as 10, is increasing at a rapid rate, and we need to do something to stop it.

All I'm doing today is urging the government to move forward. I take it in good faith that it's been said that it is going to be done this spring. Whether it's within 60 days or this spring, all I want to do is move forward with it. I thank all of the members who are going to support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to add to the debate here this afternoon. As many of my colleagues on the select committee have commented, I am disappointed that what was the most collegial effort that any of us have ever experienced has become a politicized opposition day motion. I really don't think that was necessary.

It's a difficult motion because in some ways neither yes nor no is a really satisfactory answer. It's more complex than that, because if we look at the beginning of the motion, which is to make sure that we have a long-term plan for mental health and addiction, then absolutely; we all want that. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and her colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services have committed that we will have a plan this spring. Absolutely, the preamble to the motion, we all agree with.

Should it be based on the work of the select committee? Absolutely. I would note that there's also work that has been done by the minister's advisory committee on mental health and addiction, which tabled their report, as you know, in December. I think it's also useful to comment that we need to take into our thinking the minister's advisory committee which the former Minister of Health, David Caplan, set up, because they were the more expert advice. In some ways our select committee emphasized the community and the consumer input, and the minister's advisory committee with some of the more technical input. The Minister of Health and the Minister of Children and Youth Services need to bring that all together into a whole.

As I say, the ministers have committed that we will have it this spring, so the artificial deadline that is in the motion—to me, it's quite irrelevant whether this plan shows up in 35 days or 65 days or 95 days. The important thing is that we are going to have that this spring.

The other thing that I wanted to comment on, though, was the fact that some of the earlier speakers made it sound as though nothing has happened since the select committee report was tabled. I think it's worthwhile to talk about some of the things that I've personally been involved in.

As the members of the select committee who are here will know, one of the things that we were able to do was to tour CAMH. When we toured CAMH, we met in the old admin building and then we moved on to see both the old residential facilities and the new phase 1 redevelopment, long-term treatment residential facilities. We were able to see how those new treatment facilities were so much more humane, so much more homelike, so that people who were recovering from mental illness and addiction had an opportunity to do so in a much more congenial living situation.

I had the pleasure of being able to go back to CAMH. The committee members will be interested to know that since we were there, that old administrative unit has been demolished. There are three new buildings rising in that building where we visited. Some of the services that are going to be in there are exactly the services that the select committee asked to see.

For example, there will be 12 new beds, the first of their kind in Canada, dedicated to youth dealing with both mental illness and addictions. Every member of the select committee knows that one of the things that we heard a lot about was concurrent disorders and the lack of treatment for concurrent disorders. That's being taken care of.

There are going to be 48 inpatient beds for geriatric mental health issues. Again, the committee members know that we heard a lot about geriatric mental health and the lack of treatment facilities for that.

There will also be outpatient programming and supports.

There's going to be a whole new area and treatment capacity for outpatient addiction and outpatient mood and anxiety disorders. So a whole host of things that we asked for are being put in place.

Locally, in Waterloo-Wellington, for the first time ever there are long-term acute treatment beds in my LHIN at Grand River Hospital. That's made a tremendous difference to families in my area who can now access treatment. At the Freeport campus, beds are being transferred from London. I know that's been difficult for some people, but they are long-term-treatment beds, and the clients, the consumers and their families are ecstatic that they can get treatment close to home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no more business today, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, March 10.

The House adjourned at 1751.

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Publications



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Second Session, 39th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 39e législature

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Thursday 10 March 2011

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Jeudi 10 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 10 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 10 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 9, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: The NDP is pleased to participate in this debate on the government's legislative response to the expert advisory panel on occupational health and safety report.

The NDP understands that Bill 160 represents a set of compromises more or less worked out in the Dean report process. Implicit in these compromises is the fact that neither labour nor the employer community gets everything they want in the way of changes to Ontario's health and safety regime. We understand that, sometimes, politics is about compromise, but even taking this into account, Bill 160 falls somewhat short of what we had hoped for in terms of implementing the Dean report's recommendations.

However, before I get into the changes we might realistically want in the legislation, flowing from the Dean report, I'd like to set forth the NDP's vision of what real, progressive change might look like in Ontario's health and safety regime.

In the NDP review, fundamental change in Ontario's health and safety regime would mean:

External enforcement:

—Enforcement must be based on the principle that the cost of non-compliance is greater than the cost of compliance. There must be an increase in the complement of inspectors, industrial hygienists—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: I hope they're listening; it's very good stuff here—ergonomists, toxicologists, occupational health physicians and scientists at the Ministry of Labour, as well as providing inspectors with ready access to relevant scientific research and databases;

—Introduce a more immediate and effective system of employer and supervisor penalties that can be dispensed by inspectors which do not involve the court system;

—Simplify the prosecution process so that inspectors can prosecute straightforward cases more speedily; and

—The province must develop an effective process to ensure the prosecution of appropriate cases under the Criminal Code.

Internal enforcement:

—Provide certified worker members with the unilateral power to issue stop-work directions;

—provide certified worker members of joint health and safety committees and health and safety representatives with the authority to issue provisional improvement notices;

—employers should be obliged to implement recommendations made by the joint health and safety committees and health and safety representatives;

—provide joint health and safety committees and health and safety representatives with the right to be consulted on the development and implementation of health and safety policies, programs, measures and training;

—provide workers in all workplaces with the right to have health and safety representation;

—provide members of the joint health and safety committees and all health and safety representatives with the right to standardized certification training, with annual renewals, from a training organization of their choice.

Enforce and strengthen the reprisal provisions of the Ontario health and safety act:

—give ministry inspectors the power to investigate alleged reprisals and to reinstate workers and order back pay and/or damages;

—Ministry of Labour must prosecute appropriate reprisal cases;

—provide workers alleging reprisals with an effective, simplified forum to make their reprisal case when an inspector has not investigated or acted on a reprisal allegation.

Improve and expand health and safety training:

—provide all members of a joint health and safety committee and all health and safety representatives with the right to standardized certification training, with annual renewals, from a training organization of their choice;

—the curriculum of certification training programs must be standardized—both part 1, "Basic," and part 2, "Workplace-Specific Hazard"—to ensure that all certified workers and employer representatives receive equivalent training;

—provide all new employees, supervisors and managers with mandatory, relevant and meaningful health and safety training necessary for them to fulfill the duties of their position safely and competently.

Increase health and safety support and resources for workers:

—adequately fund resources for workers, such as occupational health clinics for Ontario workers and workers' health and safety centres, to ensure that all workers have access to trusted resources for expertise, health information and training.

Regular reviews of health and safety system, legislation and regulations:

—establish a regular systematic review process of Ontario's health and safety system, including legislation and regulations to ensure the system and the law meets the needs of modern workplaces and work practices.

Our response to Bill 160 now: That's where the province would be going if we had a government in power that really cared about the health and safety of Ontario workers, but we don't.

We have to work from the Dean report recommendations, which would at least provide a solid starting point for dealing with the issues raised above. Given the scope of the topics and questions raised in the Dean report, the NDP strongly believe that this implementation legislation must receive very, very close scrutiny.

Here are the NDP's initial thoughts on the topics addressed in Bill 160. Efforts to improve collaboration and integration: Ontario's health and safety system is in many ways fragmented, poorly resourced and not responsive to the changing nature of work and technology in our province. Although there have been some—some—recent attempts to better coordinate the activities of the MOL, the WSIB and the health and safety associations, there continues to be duplication of the effort and lack of communication between these three key players. Even during the high-risk program, where considerable planning was done, there were examples of duplication, such as high-risk companies receiving the fourth mandatory MOL's inspector's visit during the same period that a WSIB Workwell audit was under way. That is unacceptable.

One approach to clarifying and aligning the roles of the MOL and the WSIB is to move prevention out of the WSIB altogether, allowing it to focus on its key business, which is administrating the province's no-fault workplace insurance system. That is the approach being taken in this legislation. Given the MOL's role to set workplace standards to protect worker health and safety, it makes intuitive sense that the ministry should play an important role in encouraging the improvement of health and safety conditions, thus preventing injuries and illnesses. Therefore, the NDP supports the notion that putting prevention and enforcement under one roof could enhance the effectiveness of both programs, allowing better communication between the two branches, allowing more effective data and information sharing and encouraging joint prevention and enforcement initiatives.

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That said, there is a danger that a lack of independence from the minister could result in unilateral decisions being made by the minister that could do real harm to Ontario's health and safety regime. In part, this has to do with maintaining the independence of the four health and safety associations, the Workers' Health and Safety Centre, and the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers.

First, as Ontario's designated health and safety training centre, the WHSC provides training for workers, their representatives and employers from every sector and region of this province. In our opinion, they do a really first-class job, and maintaining their independence should be a priority. The same can be said of the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers.

In addition to the WHSC and OHCOW, the other players to be considered are the health and safety associations. Recently restructured to form four much larger associations, these new entities are still in their formative stages. While their main mandate is to develop and deliver education and training programs, they also provide consultation and technical services. The NDP recommends that the new HSAs clarify and communicate that their primary mandate is to act as health and safety resources in their sectors. The HSAs should align their activities annually with the plans and sector strategies developed by the Ministry of Labour in consultation with labour and employer organizations.

It is also critical that the HSAs consult labour as they develop their training and educational materials, to ensure they reflect actual workplace situations and solutions to problems. Technical expertise regarding health and safety issues is not enough to create valuable and effective health and safety education; real workplace experience is needed to make the programs meaningful to participants.

From my own experience in the steel mills, when I was on joint health and safety committees and we did tours of the plant, on many occasions it would go two or three months without an inspection, and sometimes the management person wouldn't be on the tour, or vice versa. Unions were always there on the tour. We would have to put forth our concerns, and they might not be addressed for anywhere from three to four months. Even though there were time limits set forth by the Ministry of Labour to do these things, sometimes they fell by the wayside. We certainly did not have enforcement, and

even when we complained, it was a long time before an inspector would come in and deal with it. They would send letters between the company and the ministry, warning them that they should be doing their monthly safety meetings and tours, and a lot of times they didn't do it. This is one of the problems of administration and enforcement of the safety programs in this province: They have to be enforced. When one side or the other complains about it and it falls on deaf ears, that's not a good thing.

The chief prevention officer and the prevention council: The NDP supports the notion of a chief prevention officer and a prevention council. However, we have real concerns that these bodies have sufficient independence from the minister to do their jobs properly. To be honest, we don't see that independence in this legislation, and new and creative ways to increase their authority and independence are something we are going to be calling for at every possible stage. In other words, we see strengthening the independence of these organizations as a key to maintaining the integrity of organizations such as the WHSC and OHCOW. We do not want them to be simple creatures of the government of the day; we want them to be vital, independent players in the debate over appropriate health and safety policy in this province.

An example of this lack of independence is the fact that the provincial health and safety strategy that the CPO has come up with must be approved by the minister before it is released to the public. We do not agree with that. We believe that the CPO should have the independence to go right to the public with his strategy.

Training: One of the ways in which employers meet legal obligations to impart health and safety information to protect workers is through training. As mentioned in the Dean report, a recent systematic review by the Institute for Work and Health concluded that workplace training and education have a positive impact on the health and safety practices of workers. According to the Dean report:

"These findings support the multi-faceted approach set out in the recommendations of the panel: filling gaps in training requirements, promoting key elements of OHS performance such as management commitment, encouraging worker participation, influencing societal norms, and creating processes to identify and remove hazards. To make significant improvements to workplace health and safety, all of these elements are necessary."

We are not convinced that this legislation goes far enough in ensuring that adequate health and safety training is done in Ontario workplaces, and we will be looking for ways to strengthen this legislation.

Internal and external enforcement: Effective reform of our health and safety system must include the enhancement of both the external and internal enforcement system. The former involves building the legal regime administered by the Minister of Labour's OHS division, while the latter involves addressing the imbalance of power over health and safety decision-making in the workplace.

The ministry's capacity to enforce the act, its regulations and the Criminal Code in relation to serious health and safety violations must be enhanced. We believe that this legislation must strengthen our current enforcement system. Over the years, the NDP has consistently argued that the most effective incentive for employers to improve health and safety is a strong enforcement system based on the principle that the cost of violating the law is greater than the cost of compliance. There are numerous studies from many jurisdictions demonstrating that increased external inspections and external enforcement result in measurable declines in injury rates.

Strong enforcement is vital to address the imbalance of power in the workplace. The internal responsibility system is predicated on the assumption that when dealing with workplace health and safety issues, all the workplace parties are equal. Even in unionized workplaces, workers know that isn't true. In many workplaces, unionized or not, workers are afraid—actually afraid—to raise health and safety concerns, to demand their rights under the act and to report workplace injuries and illnesses. With no effective protection against employer reprisals for health and safety activity, workers depend on the enforcement agency for support. In workplaces which make up the large underground economy, and those dominated by migrant labour, new Canadians or part-time, precarious workers, the need for a strong enforcement system is even greater today.

The Ministry of Labour needs more inspectors, and inspectors need more resources, such as access to industrial hygienists, ergonomists, toxicologists, nurses, physicians and engineers. They also need easy access to databases and research to assist in addressing new and emerging workplace issues.

We have made it clear that we are open to the prevention services being moved from the WSIB to become a new branch of the MOL. With this, the research capacity with the prevention branch must be enhanced beyond what currently exists within the WSIB. Enforcement must have access to solid scientific data, both on qualitative issues, such as health and safety management systems, and highly technical, quantitative research.

Internal enforcement systems are next on the list. This involves providing workers with enhanced enforcement tools at the workplace. These provisions would address the imbalance of power between workers and employers with respect to making decisions about health and safety matters. We will be looking closely at the provisions in the legislation related to the internal responsibility system and will be making recommendations to enhance them.

We acknowledge that there have been some small steps forward in improving training for health and safety representatives in small employers, as well as significant steps forward in allowing the employee representative on a joint health and safety committee to go directly to the employer with his or her concerns if there is an impasse at the committee level.

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However, we do not think this goes far enough, and we're looking for ways to strengthen this position.

External enforcement system: The capacity of the ministry's OHS division must be enhanced with the development of several disciplines as well as by building the individual capacity of inspectors. This involves the following:

—increasing the complement of industrial hygienists, ergonomists, toxicologists, occupational health physicians and scientists;

—enhancing the skill level of inspectors by regular training; and

—developing a research arm, similar to Quebec's ITSST, that would consist of a collection of toxicologists, industrial hygienists, radiation specialists, scientists, ergonomists etc.

An important issue is reprisals. I want to start off by reading from the Dean report on the subject of reprisals.

"Section 50 authorizes the OLRB to inquire into a worker's complaint and to remove or change any penalty imposed. In doing so, the board's primary goal is to mediate a settlement between the workplace parties. It generally takes from eight to 12 weeks for mediation to begin. If a settlement cannot be reached, an adjudicator will hold a hearing. It can take up to six months for a hearing to be scheduled, and it is held in Toronto. The OLRB receives about 100 reprisal complaints a year. About 20% to 30% are from unionized workers and"—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'm having trouble hearing myself. If you could call for some order, it would be nice.

"The OLRB receives about 100 reprisal complaints a year. About 20% to 30% are from unionized workers and the rest are from unrepresented workers."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. The honourable member has asked that we keep our private conversations to a whisper or take them outside of the chamber, please. He says he can't hear himself, and I agree.

The honourable member.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you.

"Concerns have been raised that the way in which section 50 is currently administered discourages many workers from exercising their rights under the OHSA and does not adequately protect from reprisals those who do exercise their rights. The panel heard some key criticisms:

"—MOL inspectors have no role in investigating reprisal allegations"—no role. The inspector has no role.

"—The OLRB procedures are complex and take a long time, and travelling to Toronto for a hearing is expensive.

"—The MOL rarely prosecutes employers for violating section 50.

"Several serious reprisals came to the attention of the panel chair in the course of this review. In addition, information was provided to the panel that described 30 alleged reprisals over a 26-month period. In 28 of these cases, the alleged reprisal was termination of employment." I don't know how that works. You complain about safety problems and they terminate your employment. Boy, that's scary. "In 29 of the cases, the Minister of Labour issued orders on health and safety infractions. Labour stakeholders stated that for every reprisal complaint made, many more go unreported" because the employees are afraid to come forward.

That should end. Many times over the years, in the plant I was in, people didn't report things because they were afraid of the employer, and about a month later, you'd see either a fatality or somebody seriously hurt. Then the rules changed real quick. But many, many times, we went for years without any kind of support from the company. They were very slow, dragging their feet on trying to fix and make a workplace safe.

We're going to take a very close look at these reprisal sections of the bill, to see if Mr. Dean's concerns have been fully addressed. But I've got to be honest: Even at first glance, there doesn't seem to be any room for improvement in this area, which is a really scary thing.

Legislation and regulations: A look back over the past 30 years indicates that while reviews of the legislation and the system take place from time to time, these reviews are triggered by a crisis: workplace fatalities or an ideological decision by government to make a substantive change to components of the health and safety system.

The most recent OHSA amendment, workplace violence and harassment, was triggered largely by the workplace murder of Lori Dupont and the relentless lobbying by labour, women's groups and Ms. Dupont's family. That's too bad that they had to go to that extent to get something changed.

The most recent comprehensive review of our health and safety system took place in 1997, in the midst of a number of dramatic initiatives by the government of the day to alter the focus and functioning of the enforcement arm of the system, as well as make changes to other important parts of the system. Accordingly, the NDP recommends that the government establish a program of regular reviews of the performance of Ontario's health and safety system, looking at a variety of indicators, such as enforcement activity, including prosecutions, ticketing and field visits; workplace fatalities due to injuries and occupational disease; developing health and safety case law; the effects of the introduction of new legislation and regulation; and new and emerging health and safety issues and hazards.

Workers and employers need an ergonomic regulation. Although excellent work has been done developing the MSD guide and its various tools, it is not considered to be enforceable by the Ministry of Labour and, consequently, has not been widely implemented. The ministry and the WSIB recognize that over 40% of Ontario's LTIs are due to muscular disorders, yet the government refuses to take steps to introduce an enforceable ergonomic regulation to address this critical hazard. More than 50% of WSIB cases are repetitive strain injuries.

In addition, it has recently become clear that our long-held assumption, supported by the MOL practice, that the regulation for industrial establishments would be applied

in places such as educational facilities and correctional facilities is no longer correct; that doesn't happen. The NDP has learned of a number of cases where Ministry of Labour inspectors have been instructed not to apply the regulations—can you imagine that? They were instructed not to apply the regulations; that's pretty scary—leaving the workplace parties to rely on their general duty provisions to try to determine what steps to take to protect workers' health and safety. The NDP suggests that the regulation for industrial establishments be renamed to ensure that it covers all—I repeat, all—Ontario workplaces not covered by other regulations.

The next section is administrative penalties. I want to read at length from the Dean report, as I begin my comments on reprisals.

"Section 50 of the OHSA prohibits employers from dismissing, disciplining or otherwise penalizing a worker for acting in compliance with the act, regulations or orders, or for seeking enforcement of the legislation. It also sets out a process for resolving a worker's complaint of unfair employer discipline: The worker may have the matter dealt with by arbitration under a collective agreement, if any, or file a complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board.... Section 50 is intended to enable workers to freely"—I repeat, freely—"raise health and safety concerns and to fully exercise their rights under the OHSA, such as refusing unsafe work, without fear of reprisal.

"Currently, the MOL and the OLRB have distinct roles when responding to a reprisal complaint. MOL inspectors will visit the workplace and investigate any health and safety issue related to the complaint and will issue orders for contraventions of the OHSA or regulations. They will also inform the workplace parties of their rights and duties under section 50 and refer the worker to the OLRB. Inspectors typically do not investigate whether a reprisal has in fact occurred, nor do they take enforcement action related to the alleged reprisal."

This is totally unacceptable. That's their job: to inspect, report and take action. This doesn't happen.

"Section 50 authorizes the OLRB to inquire into a worker's complaint and to remove or change any penalty imposed. In doing so, the board's primary goal is to mediate a settlement between the workplace parties. It generally takes from eight to 12 weeks for mediation to begin. If a settlement cannot be reached, an adjudicator will hold a hearing." Unfortunately, "it can take up to six months for a hearing to be scheduled, and it is held here" in Toronto. "The OLRB receives about 100 reprisal complaints a year. About 20% to 30% are from unionized workers and the rest are from unrepresented workers.

"Concerns have been raised that the way in which section 50 is currently administered discourages many workers from exercising their rights under the OHSA and does not adequately protect from reprisals those who do exercise their rights. The panel heard some key criticisms:

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"—MOL inspectors have no role in investigating reprisal allegations"—that has to change.

"—The OLRB procedures are complex and take a long time, and travelling to Toronto for a hearing is expensive," and there are too many delays. In that period, people can be injured or killed because of non-action.

"—The MOL rarely prosecutes employers for violating section 50."

Can you imagine that? You go on a safety and health tour with your joint committee, and you report a problem to the employer or to the ministry. Then, two months later—because of delays and all that—that exact problem you had has not been dealt with, and that employee gets injured on something you knew about that could have happened months before.

I've seen it hundreds of times over the years in those steel plants. You report a hazard. It could happen, and the only time it happens or when something gets done is if somebody gets killed. Then everybody panics, all the inspectors come in, and they order the company to do something. They don't even fine the company.

The company knew about it. Their joint health and safety committee—at least the non-union—reported it to the managers, and they didn't do anything about it. The person gets hurt in that time period of waiting six months to get it heard, and nothing was done.

That canopy or that machinery was not repaired, the guards weren't put on, the walkways weren't repaired, or the overhead crane rails were not repaired. We've had accidents and accidents and accidents even though we knew about it. We knew the problem was there. Not only was it not addressed; it wasn't inspected, and no action was taken. We have a fatality on our hands. That's not good stuff.

"The Ministry of Labour should enhance the current legislative provisions for penalties by adding administrative monetary penalties"—actually fine them; do something—"as an enforcement tool, and should develop policies and procedures that govern their use."

The NDP supports the use of administrative penalties which will allow an inspector to impose an immediate—not a year or two years later and give them a rebate on their safety record—immediate financial penalty on an employer. Ideally, we would like to see the following: Certain violations must result in a mandatory penalty relying on a schedule of violations and penalties; repeat violations must result in higher penalties, and penalties must reflect the seriousness of the violation, how long the violation has been occurring, the number of workers affected and the impact on the worker—injuries and illnesses.

Such a system would be speedy and not easily circumvented. Employers and other workplace parties would be aware of the cost of non-compliance with certain sections of the act. Fines gathered through administrative penalties would return to the ministry and could be applied to improving the ministry's health and safety programs.

We notice that there's no mention in the act of administrative penalties, and that's something we are calling for down the road.

I can say that there are a lot of weaknesses in the bill, and hopefully, they'll listen at committee. Hopefully,

they will let the people have their say. Hopefully, we can get some changes made in the right areas. I have my doubts. There are five Liberals on the committee, two Conservatives and one NDP. I don't like our odds. Unfortunately, it shouldn't be partisan, but it becomes that way.

I think safety and health is a very important thing to the working families of this province. We want our kids at their first job to come home safely at night with all their limbs. We certainly don't want any more fatalities, and we do see them on a regular basis.

We need more inspectors. We need stiffer fines. We also need joint health and safety committees that have meat to their ability to get things done, instead of waiting months at a time.

As I've stated, in the plant I worked in for over 30 years, I've seen fatalities. I've seen reports of guys who were so upset they were ready to walk out because they said, "We told you about that concern. We warned you about that concern. Now one of our brothers or sisters is dead. Why didn't you act on it?"

The odd time, they fine them, if it was a really serious thing. But even up to three or four years ago—maybe longer than that—there were two employees killed at Dofasco in a pit. They died from fumes. They were contractors working in the plant. The joint health and safety committee—that's a non-union company; maybe if they had had a joint health and safety committee that was actually in there and saw it, and could have then warned them or had tests done, that may have helped save those guys' lives.

I think every company, every workplace in the province—I don't care if you've got one employee or 10,000 employees—should have the same rights. They should have the ability to come forward with their concerns without fear of being fired. If an employer takes that route, they should be fined heavily for threatening an employee because the employee wants to work in a safe environment. That's wrong. I don't think this government's going far enough with the penalties. I don't think they enforce the penalties as much as they should: You know, rather than install something that might cost a company $100,000 to make it safe, they get slapped on the hand with a $5,000 fine. They figure they saved $95,000, and they still go about it without making the change. That's happened for years in this province. It's got to stop. This government's got to be serious about health and safety. They've got to give those inspectors the ability to fine on the spot, just like giving a traffic ticket—especially if they've been warned before. If they didn't fix it within a reasonable amount of time and they haven't implemented it, then those employers should be held responsible financially as well, because they're putting their workers in a precarious situation where they could possibly be injured seriously or there could be a fatality. I hear everybody in this House stand up and say, "We want our families to come home safe," and that they do care about the health and welfare of people. Prove it. Make this bill tougher. Make it so that employers stand up and listen, and will take action.

You know, it's not just the fact that they're keeping their employees safe; it's the fact that these employees create wealth for these companies. They work most of their lives and put money in these companies' pockets for shareholders or for the individual owners. They deserve the respect from their employers to at least allow them to go home safely to their families. I think this bill falls short of some of the things we'd like to see.

A lot of the independent safety and health organizations are doing a wonderful job in our province. We don't want to eliminate them; we don't want to streamline all the action into one group. We want to keep them active, but we certainly want the Ministry of Labour and the WSIB to work hand in hand and make sure that these situations are improved.

I don't want to see one person die in this province. I know it's a bit of a stretch, because things happen, but I certainly don't want to see anyone hurt or die in this province because of a safety and health concern that was not dealt with.

In closing, we will be monitoring this very closely as it goes along. I hope that the minister and his parliamentary assistant are listening, and I hope that when it goes to committee we can make some changes that will shore up any holes in this legislation—because there are definitely holes in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. His job is to criticize legislation and to criticize the bill that's in front of us today. He went through various sections. I only have two minutes to respond to his concerns, but I'm sure we will have more opportunities to debate this at committee and get to more of the issues here.

I want to remind the member that we did act on the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety, otherwise known as the Dean report. There are 46 recommendations, and we plan to implement them all. I'll speak from a small section at the very beginning of this report. It says:

"If this report is fully implemented, every Ontario worker and supervisor will receive mandatory information about workplace rights and responsibilities before they start their job; every construction worker will receive entry-level training …; there will be rigorous training standards for workers who work at heights …; there will be tougher penalties for those who place workers at risk …; employers will receive better support in understanding and meeting" the health needs of workers—and it goes on in the report.

We plan to implement everything that the Dean report has said, and I don't see anywhere in the bill where we don't do that. The bill here in front of us, Bill 160, is a mirror copy, almost, of the Dean report. Even though there were various criticisms raised, I don't see where those criticisms are justified. We have placed a bill in front of this Legislature, Bill 160, which responds

directly to the Dean report and the concerns raised in the Dean report.

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The most important thing here is system integration. We're doing that. The concerns that he raised regarding the protection of vulnerable workers, for example, are contained in this bill. And other concerns that he raised are fully implemented or will be implementable in the bill in front of us today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? The honourable member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to respond to the comments that have been made regarding Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters.

This, of course, was triggered by the unfortunate and tragic death of the four construction workers. I do want to compliment and congratulate Tony Dean, who actually served as my assistant deputy minister when I was Minister of Labour, and the people that served with him on the committee for the investigation that they have undertaken and the consultation in bringing forward this legislation.

Workplace safety continues to be an issue that needs to be addressed. In fact, regrettably, in my own community yesterday, we did lose a worker on a construction site on Belmont, in Kitchener. We need to ensure that each and every step continues to be taken to keep our construction workers safe on the site. I think this piece of legislation does make progress in moving forward in this regard. I would hope that this legislation would go out to committee for further consultation, because if we have only one accident, it's one accident too many in the province of Ontario.

At this time, as well, as we go into the summer season, I think it's important that we remember that the young students who are going out to work also need to be reminded of the fact that they can refuse unsafe work.

We just need to do all we can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? The honourable member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has done an admirable job of trying to lay out the breadth and depth of the challenges in terms of occupational health and safety. People who care about occupational health and safety, activists who spend a lot of time working in the area of occupational health and safety, had great hopes that the Dean report was going to wrestle with all of the issues. I think it would be fair to say that most of those people who work in the area of occupational health and safety were modestly—modestly—happy about the report that was produced. I think it would be an overstatement to say that they were fully satisfied or completely pleased with the report that was produced.

The McGuinty Liberals are trying to say that this legislation now encompasses everything that was in the Dean report. I think what my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has pointed out, and pointed out very clearly, is that there are a number of very large gaps, that this legislation does not address the issues that need to be addressed if we are really serious about taking on occupational health and safety and making significant improvements for workers. I want to thank the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his critique, because it is very clear that this legislation, in and of itself, does not capture the essence of the Dean report, and this legislation, in and of itself, leaves all kinds of gaps that need to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? The honourable member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I want to pick up on one point that this legislation deals with, and that is that employees would have enhanced safety training and a more efficient reprisal complaint process: for example, when a worker is fired for reporting unsafe work conditions. This is something that should have been in place long ago, in my view.

A long time ago, I worked in a plant. I was about 20 years old, and I was being shown how to work at a die press, a huge 10-tonne press. It might have been more than 10 tonnes; I can't remember now. I wasn't actually being trained on how to operate it; I was being shown how to operate it, in my view, now that I'm older by some 40 years.

The press, when it came down, formed a piece for the automotive trade. When that press came down, to protect one's hands from being in it there were arm bands that worked in opposite reaction, so when the press came down, your hands were pulled out of the press. The man showing me how to run this press said, "Don't wear the arm bands." Those were the safety feature of the press at that time, some 40 years ago. He said, "Don't wear them, because they fail and they'll leave your arms in there, you won't be able to get them out and the press will come down and crush you."

My point here is that if anything like that existed in today's more modern world, a 20-year-old trying to get his first job, trying to perhaps raise a family etc. and pay bills, should have some place where they can go and be assured that when they talk about the lack of safety, their job is protected. They should know that they have the opportunity to do that, know who to go to to speak about it and not fear that they would be moved from that job or even have the job eliminated.

In my case, I didn't know what to do, so I took the man's advice. I didn't wear the safety equipment, and that was probably the wrong thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members from Scarborough Southwest, Kitchener–Waterloo, Kenora–Rainy River and Chatham–Kent–Essex.

All I can say is that, being in the trades, I spent over 30 years in heavy industrial environments. I can tell you that I served on joint health and safety tours and I actually saw fatalities; I saw injuries that we had investigated a year before or eight months before on our tours. We said this to the company and the company didn't take action. We reported it to the Ministry of Labour. The inspector came in and the company got a little rap on the hand, and we had somebody who had either lost an arm or was dead.

It's easy for the parliamentary assistant to say, "Well, we've addressed all this in the legislation." Frankly, talk is cheap. It's all about enforcement. You can write whatever you want in Toronto and put it into legislation, but it's actually going out on the work site and telling the owner of that company or companies that they have to repair this now. It's not about writing things on paper. I can show you lots of safety and health things that have been recommended over the years in legislation and have fallen on deaf ears once they get outside of Toronto, out of this building, and they certainly aren't enforced. You get the odd fine here and there, the odd company, because the community is upset when minors are killed or people are killed on the job. The whole community gets upset. Then this place takes action and they go and do a small fine, or try to placate the people of the community or the injured or the injured's family.

Not good enough. They've got to be stronger and tougher with their fines, they've got to go after these people, and they've actually got to do what they write down on the paper: actually enforce the regulations. Talk is cheap.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Attorney General has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 0949 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please welcome, in the west members' gallery, a constituent from my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham: Mr. Jag Sharma.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to introduce the fact that the members for Whitby–Oshawa, Durham and Oshawa have kept the pressure on the Minister of Transportation to extend the 407 to Highway—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not a time for members' statements. The honourable member knows better. This is for introduction of guests.

Introductions?

Mr. Dave Levac: I just want to bring to the attention of the House one more time my little buddy and new friend, Josh, who's going to be a multimillionaire by the time he's six. I want to say, "Hi, Josh." Glad you're here again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Niagara Falls and page Emily Hutchings, to welcome her mother, Kim Hutchings, to the Legislature today. It is indeed a pleasure to welcome you.

When the members come into the chamber, up on the left-hand side, carved into the wall, is a statement that says, "audi alteram partem." Do the members know what that means?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Yes: "Hear the other side."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, I think it's important, and thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville; it is "Hear the other side," and as Speaker, I would very much appreciate it if the members would be cognizant of one another today and allow each other to hear the other side.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Interjections.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Okay, someone?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Who's the Acting Premier?

Interjection: They're not sure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pardon me?

Interjections.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: It's me for now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Okay, thank you. So it's the Minister of Economic—restart the clock, please.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: May I redirect the question to the Minister of Energy? Thank you.

To the Minister of Energy: There was a time when Premier McGuinty understood that Ontario families need relief on their hydro bills and cannot afford to pay inflated prices for hydro. In 1991, as the Liberals' energy critic, he said, "Ratepayers are owed power at the lowest possible cost." That was Premier McGuinty then, but Premier McGuinty has changed. Now the out-of-touch Premier is making Ontario families pay 80 cents for five-cent power. When did Premier McGuinty become so out of touch with Ontario families that he started believing he should hike their hydro bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member wants to quote energy critics. Why don't we quote her own energy critic when he said this—and it wasn't that long ago: "Ontario needs an energy plan and the leadership to see it through. Not having a … plan is just wasting precious time."

The difference between us and them is that we have a plan. We have a 20-year long-term energy plan that spells out the investments that need to be made. They do not, and if they do, they're afraid to tell us.

One of the reasons they may be afraid to tell us is because we support a clean energy benefit that's taking 10% off the bills of Ontario families. They do not support that, and in all likelihood, their plan will try to take that away. We support taking 10%—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: There was a time when Premier McGuinty respected the fact that Ontario families foot the bill for hydro bureaucracy. In 1993, he said—another piece of history—"You know, you've got 26,000 people there operating in a bureaucratic landscape. There are too many people with too much power being paid too much money. And now all the chickens have come home to roost."

That was Premier McGuinty then, but Premier McGuinty has changed. Now the out-of-touch Premier has doubled the number of hydro employees on the sunshine list and increased their salary costs by over $750 million. When did Premier McGuinty become so out of touch with Ontario families that he stopped respecting the fact that they pay for his hydro bloat?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That party, when they were in office and their leader was sitting in cabinet, did not make the investments we needed to make in our transmission and distribution system across this province.

Since we've been in office, we have upgraded 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines across this province. That's like jumping in a car in Halifax and driving all the way across the country to Vancouver. That's a lot of upgrading of transmission lines. We've invested billions of dollars to ensure that we have a reliable energy system in this province. They have opposed our investments every step of the way.

There's a reason why they don't want to show us their energy plan; that's because they have no intention of making these important investments. They want to take us back to the days when transmission investments across this province were driving our system into the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: There was a time when Premier McGuinty understood that energy policy should be treated as economic policy. In 1991, he said that Premier Bob Rae's government had set a "dangerous precedent" by using hydro as a tool to carry out social policy initiatives.

That was Premier McGuinty then, but Premier McGuinty has changed. Now the out-of-touch Premier is using his smart meter tax machines to force Ontario families to do laundry on weekends and have the kids out of the house by 7 a.m. When did the Premier start becoming so out of touch that he stopped respecting families and started treating energy policy as social policy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member talks about energy policy being an important part of economic policy. How can you say that when you want to kill the thousands of jobs that our energy policy is creating? The last time that I checked, creating jobs is good economic policy. The last time I checked, creating 13,000 jobs last year is good for our economy—jobs that that party wants to kill. The last time I checked, creating 50,000 new clean energy jobs by 2012 was good economic policy. Attracting billions of dollars of private sector investment into our economy is good economic policy.

They say one thing; they do another. Bring out your plan so we can see what kind of economic policy you have in your plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, to the Minister of Energy: There was a time when Premier McGuinty believed Ontario families needed relief from skyrocketing hydro bills. In 1992, he said, "You will know that we have a very serious problem in Ontario when it comes to hydro rates. Those rates are going through the roof. At a time when inflation is less than 2%, rates this year went up by 11.9% and next year they'll likely go up by close to 9%."

That was Premier McGuinty then, but Premier McGuinty has changed. Now the out-of-touch Premier has increased hydro rates by 75% to 100%, if you have a smart meter tax machine, and is increasing hydro bills by another staggering 46%. When did Premier McGuinty become so out of touch with Ontario families that they stopped believing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, energy policy is about creating jobs. Good energy policy is good economic policy. The people of Markham know this because I joined the Minister of Economic Development and Trade in Markham just yesterday, where we made an announcement of a $40-million grid innovation centre that's going to create 146 jobs in that community. That's the next generation of jobs. That's a partnership with General Electric that's establishing this innovation centre that's going to develop and manufacture smart grid products and services for Ontario—not only for our jurisdiction, but for the entire world.

Our energy policies are reaching out to the world. We're building a clean energy economy that's creating thousands of clean energy jobs today to serve our own needs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1040

Mrs. Christine Elliott: When we said their Green Energy Act and its high hydro rates would cost Ontario families their jobs and not create them, they laughed at us. However, in 1991, Premier McGuinty said, "I submit I am not going out on much of a limb when I say there is a direct correlation between Hydro's rates and our rate of unemployment in Ontario. As the rates go up, so will the rate of unemployment."

That was Premier McGuinty then, but Premier McGuinty has changed. Now, the out-of-touch Premier is trying to justify his hikes to hydro bills as a job creation program, if you can believe it.

When did the Premier become so out of touch that he forgot higher hydro bills mean higher unemployment?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Smart grids start with smart meters. This is a $40-million investment that we're making in Markham. That announcement we made yesterday will create 146 good Ontario jobs in Markham—jobs that your policy, your plan that you're afraid to share with people, would kill.

It's time for that party to come clean with Ontario families. Ontario families are going to see right through the reasons why you're afraid to come forward with your plan. Their plan would kill thousands of jobs in our economy, including those 146 jobs that we just announced in Markham. The $40-million investment that General Electric is making in that community under our policies would not be taking place under the plan that you're afraid to share with Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: There was a time when Premier McGuinty understood that high hydro bills drive away jobs from Ontario families—and we're certainly seeing that in Ontario today. In 1992, he said, "If businesses can't count on a secure and inexpensive supply of electricity, they won't invest in Ontario."

Mr. Norm Miller: Who said that?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: That was Premier McGuinty. That was him then, but he has changed now. Now, the Premier's expensive energy experiments are driving jobs out of Ontario.

When did the Premier become so out of touch that he forgot his expensive energy experiments mean fewer jobs for Ontarians?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're still waiting to hear when that party wants to come forward with their plan. We've heard from a number of members and we know they're in an absolute state of confusion over there. Listen to this: The member for Simcoe–Grey said back in October, "We're close to putting out our party platform." Then the member for Thornhill said, "Sometime in early 2011." Well, it's early 2011—nothing. Then the member for Nepean–Carleton said, "So our platform will be coming out in March." Guess what? It's March—still no plan. Then the member for Lanark said, "I guess I'll let it out of the bag. We'll be launching our platform in April." Then the PC campaign secretary, who appears to know more than the members of that caucus, said, "Maybe in May."

They're afraid to put out their plan because they know their plan will kill jobs; they know their plan will take away our clean energy benefit—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Jill Anzarut, a 35-year-old mother of two young children, is fighting breast cancer. Jill's doctor prescribed a drug called Herceptin, a drug approved for the very kind of breast cancer that she is diagnosed with, but she was told her tumour is not big enough yet, and OHIP would not cover the $40,000-a-year cost. She wants to know why the McGuinty Liberal government is denying her treatment.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I want to start by saying that when people are faced with health care challenges, health care crises, we want to be there for them. We want to do everything we can to support them in their journey back to good health. Of course, that applies in this case as well.

When it comes to funding drugs, everyone in this House should know that that decision is not one that rests with the Minister of Health; that is not one that rests with the cabinet table. In 2006, we took the power to make decisions about what drugs are funded and what drugs are not funded out of the political arena.

We believe in evidence. We are committed to relying on our experts. The experts are continually reviewing the evidence that tells us what we ought to fund and what we ought not to fund—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Jill is a courageous and determined woman in a terrifying situation. She just started her chemotherapy treatment recently, and she's a little scared, but a little bit more than frustrated.

I had a chance to talk to her this morning. She asked me why the experts in Alberta, British Columbia and Nova Scotia have all approved Herceptin for use by women with very similar kinds of breast cancer. Manitoba has approved it for use on a case-by-case basis. She wants to know if the Premier and his minister think these provinces are doing something wrong.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite needs to understand that this issue is not one that belongs in the political arena. It is our responsibility as a government to ensure that there is enough money in the drug budget. We took an important step to actually decrease the price of generic drugs so that we could fund more drugs. To make a political issue out of this, in my opinion, is not the direction we should be going. We rely on evidence. Cancer Care Ontario, the Committee to Evalu-

ate Drugs, are constantly evaluating the decisions we make around drug funding, and that is where the decision-making ought to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In 2005, the then Minister of Health announced that Herceptin would be available for early breast cancer. In a press release, the government bragged about fast-tracking the review process to get the drug approved. But now, in 2011, why does Jill have to fight both breast cancer and her government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite ought to know that in 2006 we changed the way drugs are approved in this province. We cannot have a health system where the stories that land on the front page of the paper determine our health care policy. We must rely on the evidence. It would be unfair to those who do not get their stories on the front page if we were to give priority to those who do.

We must take a responsible approach when it comes to funding drugs. We must rely on the evidence, we must always be examining the new evidence, and that is exactly what we are doing in this case.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Acting Premier: In September 2009, the Ombudsman released a damning report on this government's handling of Avastin, a drug approved for metatastic colorectal cancer. The Ombudsman found that the minister had placed an arbitrary cap on the funding of this drug that "disregards the individual needs of medical consumers as well as the ethical obligations of their physicians."

Can the Acting Premier assure Ontarians that his government isn't repeating the same mistakes today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, thank you for the question. I must reiterate that we do not—I do not, our cabinet does not, politicians do not—decide, and ought not decide, what drugs are covered and for whom.

I do want to refer to the Ombudsman's report on Avastin. This is what he said, and I'm quoting from page 35: "Funding decisions cannot be made in a vacuum, but must take into account a variety of sometimes countervailing factors. The costs associated with the new drug must be weighed against its medical benefits."

We have taken as a significant responsibility increasing funding for prescription drugs. We're able to fund more drugs, we're able to help more people, and the decisions on what drugs are funded—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Jill, as a mom, is facing a situation that no one should have to face. Today, she's at the hospital while her son is getting his tonsils out. That should be enough stress for any mother in a single day. Instead, she's also facing a confusing bureaucratic maze.

The Minister of Health argues that government has no role to play in these decisions. If it's not the government's job to answer for bureaucratic decisions that lack compassion and transparency and common sense, whose job is it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I take it from the line of questioning that the member opposite believes we ought to fund every drug that is approved for use in Canada. If the member opposite actually is taking that position, then I would expect that she put that in her platform as we move forward into this election.

1050

I do think that every government in Ontario historically has had a formulary that lists drugs that are funded by the taxpayers of this province. We owe it to taxpayers to rely on evidence. Much as I would love to provide every drug to every Ontarian, it would be irresponsible of me to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Jill, her family and thousands of people supporting her are simply asking this government to ensure that a medically proven treatment is available to those in need.

Canadians have made it very clear that the size of our bank account should not be a factor when making decisions about our health, yet more and more people are being told to pay for their treatment out of pocket, or to cover the cost of delisted services, or to pay $1,800 a day to stay in the hospital. Just because Jill and her family happen to call Ontario home, she is being made to fight her health care system as well as fight her cancer.

When are this Premier and his minister going to take some responsibility and deliver a health care system in Ontario that delivers for people when they need it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I don't know how many more times I need to say this. We simply must rely on the expertise of the scientists, the researchers and the physicians, all of whom have a role to play in our evaluation of drugs. This is an issue that belongs with the experts.

Our job is to ensure that there is adequate funding. I am very pleased to say that we have tripled the funding for cancer-fighting drugs since we were elected in 2003. As of January, we've added 171 new drugs to the formulary since we began our drug reforms back in 2006. We fund 44 cancer drugs, and we are investing in new cancer care projects across the province. My—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, today we'll see the latest backtrack from the desperate, out-of-gas McGuinty Liberals. In the latest rollout of their seat-saver plan, the McGuinty Liberals are announcing today that they will complete Highway 407 by 2020.

First the Liberals promised to complete the 407 by 2013; then they backtracked and promised to complete

part of it by 2013. Now they are promising to complete the whole thing by 2020.

After backtracking on a backtrack, do the McGuinty Liberals really believe that Ontario families will believe this latest promise?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would characterize what I'm doing today as moving forward.

We've been listening to the people in Durham region. I've met with the mayors. I've had conversations with the chair of Durham region. What we've heard is that there are concerns about a seamless build. They want to know if we can go a bit farther than Simcoe Road, and they want to know the time frame for the building of the second stage. The folks in Peterborough and Lindsay have the same questions.

We have made a commitment all along to build to 35/115. What I'll be doing today is confirming a time frame.

I understand that the party opposite (a) doesn't understand what consultation means, and (b) thinks that this road should be in private hands, not in public hands.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, the Liberals are basically addicted to breaking promises. They're desperate, out of gas and on the run, and their promises simply can't be trusted. The McGuinty Liberals have shown they will say and do anything in the year of an election to save a seat. From promising no new taxes to putting moratoriums on wind projects, the McGuinty Liberals make promises they never intend to keep.

Do the Liberals really believe that the families of Ontario will believe them this time? After all these broken promises, they simply don't trust you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The party opposite has been pressuring our government to be clear about the time frame. They've been asking us to build the first stage out a bit farther. So it seems to me that we're responding to the concerns both of the community folks and, ostensibly, of the representatives of those folks.

I really see this as a very clear message to the people who live in the corridor between Brock Road and 35/115 that we've listened to their concerns. We've always been committed to building the 407 out to 35/115.

We've also been committed to keeping this road in public hands. We will not sell this road off. The tolling revenue will come to the provincial government. The people of Ontario will benefit directly from the building of this road.

DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, Gerry Vautour, who operates a bear management unit, has contacted my office to say that MNR is still using some form of defoliant to clear brush on his bear management unit. He complains that two days after spraying the defoliant, all of the foliage is dead and wonders if this chemical is not getting into the food chain.

The process you are currently establishing to investigate the use of Agent Orange has the very people who used the Agent Orange and are still using some form of defoliant in charge of the investigation. Why will you not now agree that we need to have an independent third party investigate this matter?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to answer the question. I want to state categorically: We are not using the same herbicide, and I don't want anybody to be misled by that. We're not using 2,4,5-T. I want that to be very clear.

I'm very concerned about this issue, and since learning about it I have worked hard, committing to obtaining all the facts. We're in the process right now of getting an independent committee together, and I think it's very important that we have everybody co-operate and provide the information. We've contacted the federal health ministry and asked them to be involved. My deputy has contacted all of the our comparable partners in every province to talk to them.

This was a federally approved herbicide that was used across Canada, and we're determining right now where it was used. We know it was used in the agriculture sector, in transportation as well as MNR, and it's important that we share—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You don't seem to understand what the problem is. The problem is this: It's not an independent investigation that you're carrying out. You're the minister in charge of the very ministry that used Agent Orange and is using some form of defoliant. You're asking the very people who are using a form of defoliant, previously Agent Orange, to investigate themselves and then to turn that information over to another committee that you're going to appoint.

I'm not laying the finger of blame on you or saying that it's your fault, but I want somebody who is independent, who is a third party, who is transparent, who will both gather the information and do the investigation. Why won't you do that?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I appreciate the question, and I'm very pleased to answer the question.

I want your constituent to call our toll-free number—

Laughter.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: —and anybody else in the general public because, you know what? I don't want them to worry. I think this is a very important issue. It's really not a laughing matter.

I think it's very premature for the honourable member to criticize the independent nature of the board. The terms of reference are still being drafted. We're still in the process of selecting the membership, so it's premature to say it isn't independent. We all know that it's important to select a panel that will devote its time to this one issue. I think the people of Ontario expect us to conduct an independent inquiry because this is about people's health. We take it very seriously. I'm very con-

cerned, and we need your constituent to work with us and provide that information.

We've had plenty of people call in. We're working closely with them, and I look forward to making an announcement very soon.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. This morning, our government made an important announcement regarding the eastward extension of Highway 407. In my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I've heard many concerns from my constituents and municipal representatives about building this project in two phases and ending the first phase at Simcoe Street. There have been concerns about impacts this would have on local infrastructure. I know that the Minister of Transportation and officials have been working quietly to address these concerns and to find a solution.

The minister has spoken about the announcement. Would the minister provide some more details for the House?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for his advocacy on this.

1100

As I said, I've been in conversation with many people about this issue, pretty much since I was appointed to this file. We listened to communities, businesses and individuals in the region. This morning, I'm happy to say that we can confirm a workable solution that will allow us to confirm a revised first stage and some dates for the second stage, which is exactly what people, including the member for Durham, have been asking for. We'll be able to extend the first stage of the 407 east to Harmony Road instead of Simcoe Street—it's about three-plus kilometres beyond Simcoe Street—and that extension will not delay our target of the opening of 2015 for the first stage. That's what was critical: that we not delay that first stage. So 2015 is the date for that first one.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Minister, for that answer, and thank you for moving forward on this important investment for the communities of my riding.

The Leader of the Opposition was recently in my riding of Peterborough, saying that he would build the 407 to 35/115. But I note, as many others have, that he did not provide a firm date. He also refused to let us know if he would sell off the extension of the 407 like his predecessor did. The 407 ETR was sold for a fire-sale price of $3.1 billion in 1999 and led to the establishment of a second Ontario Place in Madrid, Spain. The highway is currently valued at more than $9 billion.

Will the minister please tell my constituents and everyone in Durham, Peterborough and Kawartha Lakes when the 407 extension will be fully completed all the way to 35/115 and who will benefit from this road—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've always said, we are going to build the highway to 35/115. The member for Peterborough has been very helpful in advising me on this and in promoting that we get this road built as quickly as possible.

We're confirming the plan to build the second phase of the 407 east, with an interim opening at Taunton Road in 2017, and all the way to 35/115 in 2020. We're already acquiring property along the corridor, and we're doing other preparatory work so that we can get going on that second stage as quickly as possible.

We're honouring our commitment to build this highway in the most affordable and efficient way possible. Phase 2 has to go through some very sensitive lands, so we have to do this responsibly; it'll be a green, friendly road. We will continue to work with the municipalities along the corridor to make sure that they have the infrastructure they need—and we will not be selling this road off in a fire sale.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Acting Premier. There was a time when Premier McGuinty wasn't so out of touch and actually listened to Ontario families. In 1991, he said, "We like to engage in all kinds of esoteric and sometimes academic arguments in this House.... But the people on the street, I can assure members, are not talking about supply and demand; they are talking about their hydro bills."

That was Premier McGuinty then, but Premier McGuinty has changed. Now the out-of-touch Premier spends all his time making academic arguments on why he is hiking hydro bills. When did the Premier become so out of touch that he traded in listening to Main Street for lecturing to Bay Street?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think what Ontario families would like to know is what one Mark Spiro, PC campaign director, had to say when asked why the Tories haven't put out their hydro policy. This is a quote: "The only people who are demanding our policy at the moment in a booklet form, where it's simple and easy and they don't have to do any work, (are journalists), because they want to take the opportunity to shoot at it."

I can say unequivocally that the people of Ontario want to know what their hydro position is. They want to know, given that you almost destroyed the hydro system, where you get off criticizing the efforts of the government that's made enormous investments in a cleaner, greener, reliable system. Just tell us what you stand for. Will you, please?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I love getting direct answers to direct questions.

There was a time when Premier McGuinty showed respect for Ontario families. In 1992, after learning that Ontario families had paid for a new boardroom on their

hydro bills, he said, "It's nothing short of an obscenity really. We are in the context of a terrible recession; hydro rates are going up approximately 30% over three years. A hydro boardroom is a luxury ... and we can't afford it."

That was Premier McGuinty then, but Premier McGuinty has changed. Now, the out-of-touch Premier hasn't just bought a new boardroom; he has built an entire new hydro agency, the OPA. When did Premier McGuinty become so out of touch with Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think Ontario ratepayers want to know what happened to Eleanor Clitheroe's yacht that that government bought with hydro money. They want to know: Are you going to go back to untendered hydro contracts for Tory consultants in the millions of dollars that don't bring anything back? Are we going to go back to rolling brownouts or blackouts?

We won't, because of the actions of the McGuinty government: building new transmission, cleaning up our energy system and building a better and more reliable system for all Ontarians.

I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to tell people what he is going to do beyond closing hospitals and beyond closing down full-day kindergarten. That's all we want: just a little hint about what they're going to do. We think we know what they're going to do. They don't want to tell people because they know people will not vote for what they're going to do.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. For Ontarians living in the London area, the pain and suffering of a hip fracture does not end with the accident. Sadly, it only increases as patients have to wait days and days for the necessary emergency operation. This delay is dangerous and cruel.

How is it that the minister has ignored this situation for so many years as her constituents have suffered?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that health care in London is so much better now than it was when we took office that this question borders on the absurd. We have made significant improvements in bringing down wait times for virtually every procedure. We have made significant infrastructure investments. We have far more Londoners able to access primary health care. We are continuing to make improvements.

We know there is still more to do. That's why we are looking forward to the next four years on this side of the House. We've come a long way when it comes to improving health care, but there is still more to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This shameful situation shows more cracks in our health care system. The minister's prized wait time program has abandoned these patients. Hip fractures occur 14% more frequently in London, the minister's own hometown, than in other parts of Ontario. Yet, like in many other regions, there are not enough orthopaedic surgeons.

Why is it that, in Ontario, getting access to the health care you need depends on where it is that you live?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think everyone knows that lowering wait times has been a real priority for this government. When we came into office, the government prior to us didn't even bother to measure wait times, let alone publicly report them and develop a strategy to bring them down.

In the almost eight years that we have been in government, we have seen remarkable improvements. We measure, we publicly report, and we have seen the results of wait times coming down. I am very proud that the Fraser Institute reported that Ontario has the lowest wait times in the country. The Wait Time Alliance acknowledges that Ontario is leading the way.

Let me talk about real results, tangible results, that are meaningful to people. We have been able to take 191 days off cataract surgery, 160 days off hip surgery and 243 days off knee replacement surgery. Health care is getting better—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is also for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, I know that Mina Grossman-Ianni's term as chair of the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network, which serves my riding, is set to expire on April 1. The chairs of LHIN boards play an essential role in our health care system.

LHINs improve health care in our communities, they give people a say in local health care decisions, they determine priorities through community engagement, they support innovative programs, and they remove silos through the integration of care. LHINs are essential in the Ontario health care system, and we need to ensure that strong leadership is in place to support the people of Ontario.

Minister, please tell this House who will chair the Erie St. Clair LHIN come April 2.

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you very much to the member from Essex, who never stops advocating for better health care for the people in Essex.

I would like to start by offering my heartfelt thanks to Mina Grossman-Ianni for her leadership as chair of the Erie St. Clair LHIN. She has done a tremendous job, and she will be sorely missed.

I'm very pleased to announce that I have appointed Dave Cooke as the next chair of the Erie St. Clair LHIN board of directors. Dave Cooke, obviously, is no stranger to this House. We at Queen's Park know him well and admire him. He was an MPP from the Windsor area for 20 years. He was Minister of Education and Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs under the NDP government, and he never, ever lost his—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The ability to attract such strong multi-partisan leaders to our local health integration networks really does speak to the strength and importance of the system and, specifically, to the importance of local health care.

LHINs streamline health care so it works for the people. Through local health integration networks and their leaders, we are delivering results in communities and giving those communities a say in their local health care.

We've had many successes across Ontario because of the LHINs, such as lowering wait times and the aging at home program. These programs are so successful because of the local health care model and the leadership behind it.

I know that recently even more strong leaders have come on board to support and drive our LHIN model. Minister, please tell me about other leaders in our local health integration networks.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to have the opportunity to talk about another great new leader in our LHINs. There are many to speak about, but I'm going to focus on one: the new chair of the Champlain LHIN, Dr. Wilbert Keon, a world-renowned heart surgeon and former Conservative senator. He's also a very strong supporter of a local model of governance for health care.

I'd like to read a quote from Dr. Keon that was in the Ottawa Citizen: "My love for health care transcends my political persuasions. I have agreed to do whatever I can to help the local health network make the necessary adjustments to streamline the system as a whole."

Dr. Keon—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday Nick Day, a student representative at Queen's University, used his position as rector to accuse Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians, in a letter attacking your own federal leader. Will you condemn the comments of Mr. Day in writing, in a letter to the chancellor and the board of trustees of Queen's University?

Hon. John Milloy: I think all members realize that on university campuses, it's about finding a balance. We want to find a balance between the safety and security of students, along with providing an environment where individuals and groups can participate in debate and discussion on a wide range of issues that you and I may not agree with.

Earlier this year, as members know, the Legislature condemned anti-Semitism on our university campuses, especially in the form of Israel anti-apartheid week.

Jewish students as well as faculty must be able to live, work and study at our universities without fear of discrimination or hatred, and I know that all our institutions work hard to create that balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister, you talk about us not agreeing—this House unanimously approved a motion by my friend the member for Thornhill to ban the prejudicial term "Israeli Apartheid Week." All members of this House stood to condemn the word "apartheid" for what it really is: hate-filled.

Now a student representative is not only using the term, but accusing Israel of genocide, in a letter to your own federal leader. Will you, along with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, condemn the actions of Mr. Day in a letter to the chancellor and the board of trustees? Will you do it?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, our government remains committed to fighting discrimination in all its forms. We have spoken out against anti-Semitism. We have very strong ties to the state of Israel. The Premier, of course, led a mission there earlier last summer.

This is about balance. This is about campuses maintaining the right of students and faculty to have discussions about issues that the member or I or anyone in this House may not agree with, and at the same time protecting the rights of students to be able to study in safety. It is a matter of finding that balance. I know from my regular meetings with university and college presidents that they work very hard to maintain that balance, and I have every confidence that these institutions will continue to provide the necessary environment for debate and discussion, and also for the safety and security of students.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This question is to the Acting Premier. Residents in Pronto and Serpent River in the township of the North Shore face a continuing water crisis. Their water rates are soaring by yet another 30%, they are being slapped with thousands of dollars of capital charges to pay for a new water treatment plant, but unbelievably, they still can't drink their water. In fact, these residents have been without potable water in their homes for most of the past 10 years. Why is the McGuinty government refusing to help these residents?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government has made unprecedented investments in infrastructure, including water pipes and helping municipalities and others to upgrade their facilities. We take all these matters very seriously. I can assure the member opposite that the kinds of investments we have made—and, by the way, that member and her party voted against the budgets that created the money for those initiatives—every single one of them. I can assure her and this House and the people of those communities that we will continue to work with all communities to ensure they have the highest quality of potable water available to all their citizens.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a government that not so long ago was bragging about being on the leading edge of exporting clean water technology around the world. These residents of the North Shore have been

seeking help from their provincial government for years and years, but today they are still without clean water right here in Ontario.

Communities like the North Shore simply don't have enough residents to pay the full cost of expensive water treatment centres. Many residents in this community are seniors who are on fixed incomes. They have worked hard all their lives, and their water is so dirty that they cannot even bathe in it. How many more years does the McGuinty government expect these families to continue to go without clean water?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My understanding is that this government has put $3 million into 20 homes in that community to clean up the situation. I undertake to look into it further. I always want to double-check the information that's provided by the leader of the third party in the House. We will do that. I'm informed that some $3 million has been invested at this point by the government of Ontario, and we look forward to working with that community and other communities to ensure a clean, potable supply of water for all Ontarians.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, this week is National Social Work Week. Whether it's the work they do in human rights protection, issues impacting children and youth, or health care accessibility, social workers are on the very front lines of helping Ontarians every day in this province.

National Social Work Week is an important opportunity to recognize the work social workers do throughout Ontario. Minister, what message do you have for Ontario's social workers as they celebrate this important week?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This gives me a good opportunity to thank the member from Willowdale for his contribution. In fact, the member is a recipient of an award from the Social Work Doctors' Colloquium in recognition of his significant commitments to the value of a caring and just society. Congratulations.

This year's theme, Social Workers Are There for You, highlights the commitment and compassion that social workers bring to their jobs every day. Social workers have always been at the forefront of the programs and services the province provides for vulnerable individuals and families.

I want to take a moment to recognize the valuable work social workers do across the province during National Social Work Week. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

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Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Minister. I'm very happy to speak on behalf of my many constituents in Willowdale who benefit from the work of social workers and, indeed, who work as social workers. However, in order for social workers to be able to carry out the important work they do, they need the continued support of our government. Minister, what is being done? What are you doing to give social workers the tools and the recognition they need to assist those who most need their help here in Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Last year our government passed legislation related to regulated health professions. It includes amendments to the Social Work and Social Service Work Act that governs social workers. These changes mean that people who have earned their doctorate degree in social work will be allowed now to use the title "doctor" when providing health care to individuals.

Social workers are at the forefront of fighting against poverty and helping those most vulnerable in society every day. Every day we hear stories of success of individuals, families, groups and communities who have benefited from the contribution of social workers. Our government will continue to enhance and protect this vital public service as we move forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COURT INTERPRETERS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Attorney General. Injustice is rearing its ugly head because, under your watch, our courts continue to be plagued by delay. This serious threat to Ontario families has been made worse by a lack of court interpreters. Defence lawyers won't accept partially accredited interpreters. Crown attorneys are offering plea bargains and withdrawing charges. Judges are being forced to compete with each other for the few interpreters that remain. This situation is out of control. Justice in Ontario is being threatened from every corner. Minister, why aren't you acting to ensure the shortage of interpreters won't lead to a mass stay of charges because of this unacceptable delay?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm going to get to the interpreters in the supplementary, but the whole premise of my friend's question is just incorrect. For 18 years, charges in criminal courts took more appearances. For 18 years, the time it took the average case in criminal courts went up. A couple of years ago, we launched something called Justice on Target. It was about working with all of our justice participants and developing a better approach. It was not about more money. Now, for the first time in 18 years—and you can check out the website; we've thrown it up there—the average number of appearances didn't go up; it went down. The time it takes didn't go up; it went down. We're getting it done where you weren't able to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Justice on Target promised a 30% reduction, which is on its way to unmitigated failure. You've barely achieved 5%. It's an unmitigated failure.

In 2005, this government was warned about the potential court interpreter crisis. Your government did nothing for the last six years. Last week, the next twist in this

saga that is threatening the safety of Ontario communities revealed itself: Freelance court interpreters in Ottawa were refusing to work. Minister, is it not true that the Liberal failure to address this problem for six long years is threatening the security of Ontario families?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Since my honourable friend was wrong in the premise for the first question, you can be assured that he's wrong in the premise for the second. We're working very closely with court interpreters to make sure courts have, in this very challenged jurisdiction where you can have up to 200 languages, fully accredited, well-trained and available interpreters, and we'll keep working with them.

But, of course, to return to the premise of the first question, you know they poured millions of dollars into the system. They spent a lot of time and effort. They did reports and they accomplished absolutely nothing. By reducing the time it takes for the average case, we make sure that police are on the street protecting. We make sure that citizens' time is respected. We strengthened our system of justice. That's progress. They'd take us back to the old days. It's time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Yesterday, the minister received an urgent letter from Joan Murchison of Sarnia. Her 16-year-old daughter Stephanie has rapidly become legally blind.

Joan is on CPP disability and ODSP. Her daughter is being seen at the University of Waterloo's School of Optometry, and up to now, ODSP and assistive devices have covered Stephanie's appointments and other needs.

Stephanie needs crucial tests to determine the cause of her blindness. ODSP refuses to fund the $220 cost. Ms. Murchison asked for an internal review and was denied. What is this minister going to do to help prevent Stephanie from going blind?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank the member for bringing this matter to my attention. I have not received the letter yet, but I'll pay very much attention, like I do with all my files, when I receive it.

I would like to investigate it more. I'm very surprised with the statement of facts that the member is bringing to the House today. One thing I can say is that under ODSP, all the eye exams are covered. I'm very surprised to hear about that matter this morning in the House, but I'll make sure that myself and the Minister of Health look into that file and that we have an agreeable solution to that case.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I have copies here for the minister, and I will give her copies as soon as we break here today.

This young woman's vision deteriorated from 10/100 to 20/300 now. These tests will show why she became blind and determine if her blindness can be improved or reversed. The tests will show if there is available treatment to prevent her from becoming worse.

Her mother cannot afford to pay. Stephanie can't wait for the Social Benefits Tribunal, which she has been sent to, to give her a hearing date. The minister has the authority to make the right decision in order to help Stephanie now, before she becomes worse. Will this minister immediately order the ODSP to pay the $220 for Stephanie's tests so she doesn't turn blind while she's waiting for reviews?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's not the way that I go about my file in my ministry. I will say that I will review the file and I will be speaking with the Minister of Health, because I'm very surprised that this is not covered under the health plan. I will take this matter to heart and I will come back to the individual about what we will be doing with this request.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Recently, our government tabled its plans, through proposed legislation, for a long-term affordable housing strategy. While my constituents in Guelph are pleased that there is new affordable housing for seniors under construction at St. Joe's in Guelph, concerns remain on the subject of housing. They wonder if we are doing enough for those who are less fortunate.

This is an issue that my constituents and I are very passionate about. To the minister: Can you please outline what has been done for housing in the province of Ontario and how this proposed new long-term affordable housing strategy will complement what we are already doing?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for Guelph for the question and for being such a devoted advocate for affordable housing.

We listened to her, to her constituents and to those people across the province of Ontario who told us that the framework for more flexible, locally driven approaches to housing delivery have to happen municipality by municipality. We listened to the member for Guelph, who said that we have to make sure that we build our foundation and we build our future in our municipalities—that one-size-fits-all didn't work in the past and won't work in the future.

We listened to them, and we're ensuring that our local provider, our municipalities, our service providers are given the tools to deliver affordable housing in a very meaningful way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am happy to hear that our government is recognizing the expertise of municipalities and continuing to seek their input. During the debate on Bill 140, the long-term affordable housing strategy, there were several concerns levied by the NDP and PC housing critics. They suggested that because there is no specific funding attached to this strategy, it won't accomplish much.

As you can imagine, this has raised some questions in my riding of Guelph. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please outline for this House what this government is doing to ensure that those who require housing and support in Guelph and throughout Ontario are receiving it?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Because of the advocacy of people like the member for Guelph and other members in this House, the reality is that our government has been investing an unprecedented amount since 2003. More than $2.5 billion has been invested to date, which is more than any other government before us. These investments have built or repaired more than 260,000 units. That's the equivalent of helping more than 680,000 Ontarians.

The sad part is that the NDP voted against every one of these investments. As for the Ontario PC Party, well, when they were in power, they said, "We're moving out of the affordable housing business. We're cutting 17,000 units"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOME CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Home care services at our CCAC were cut last year, and yet the Central West CCAC has refurbished an executive suite, complete with a new luxury bathroom, a kitchen with stainless steel appliances and an office with cherrywood furniture, to the tune of $300,000.

Minister, is it acceptable to you for the Central West CCAC to spend health care dollars on luxury renovations instead of providing front-line care to the residents of my riding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me just begin by saying that home care has not been cut in the member opposite's riding, nor has it been cut in any riding in this province. So let's start with the truth on this one.

We are seeing significant improvements in home care in this province, and I'm very delighted that we are, in fact, treating hundreds of thousands more people now than we did when we took office. On this side of the House, we're committed to improving health care. We are committed to investing more in health care.

Your party position is to cut health care spending. It's what you did when you had the chance before, and it's what you will do again. So if you're really, truly concerned about improving health care, I think you might want to revisit your decisions to cut taxes at the expense of health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to ask all members to join me in thanking this wonderful group of pages for their hard work and dedication. We wish each and every one of them all the best in their future endeavours. Thank you very much.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1134 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Jim Stephenson is with us today, in the members' gallery. I'll make reference to him later on, in my remarks associated with the bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Niagara Falls and page Emily Hutchings, to welcome her father, Brad Hutchings, to Queen's Park today. Thank you for joining us.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARMAND La BARGE

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to pay tribute to a great Canadian who has served our province and his community with distinction. Former York region police chief Armand La Barge has earned his reputation as a person who gets things done for the benefit of his community. His tireless, lifelong volunteer efforts have earned the respect of political, business and community leaders who continue to look to him for counsel, advice and inspiration.

Armand La Barge's enthusiastic leadership and hands-on involvement with community organizations have enriched countless lives and have inspired humanitarian and cultural projects that will benefit Ontarians for generations to come.

Armand La Barge's volunteer contributions reflect his conviction that active participation in community life is not only a privilege; it is also a responsibility.

Today I join with Community Living Newmarket/Aurora district, his family, his many friends and associates, and community members in congratulating Armand La Barge as the recipient of the Community Service Award for a Lifetime of Excellence in Service.

No one is more deserving of this honour than my friend Armand La Barge. On behalf of all members of the Parliament of Ontario, I extend our best wishes and sincere appreciation to this exemplary citizen of Ontario and of Canada.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to inform the Legislature of a local concern in my riding known as the

quarry lands, located in the vicinity of Victoria Park and Gerrard. This particular site is vacant land that was formerly a brickyard and then became a dump site. Part of this land is owned by a company that is proposing to build four high-rise buildings in the area.

Since my election in 2003, I've been strongly opposed to this development. In 2004, I brought this matter to the attention of the Minister of the Environment. At that time, I was assured by the minister that the environment and the health and safety of the community would be protected.

I wish to emphasize that the proposed development of the quarry lands is a planning matter, which is a city-of-Toronto matter and not a provincial matter. However, if the city, the province or the municipal board approves any development on the quarry lands, I'm going to ask the province to require the applicant to undergo a record-of-site condition for the property, to ensure that the lands are not contaminated.

I wish to reassure the concerned citizens of the quarry lands development and all local residents in my riding that I will do whatever I can to assist them to put a stop to this proposed development in its present form, and to work with the residents to make sure that we get proper development in the area.

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Toby Barrett: Recently I was honoured to address the 56th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery at the Brantford Armoury. This was my first regimental parade since graduating as a gunner with the 56th Field Regiment in 1963. There was no war then.

More than 25 Afghanistan medals were handed out to soldiers assembled from armouries in St. Catharines, Brantford and Simcoe. An overwhelming 75% of the regiment has served overseas. They were a very impressive bunch.

I'm very proud of the accomplishments of Task Force Afghanistan 110 and Operation Athena. Accolades were presented on behalf of their commanding officers, the mayors of Brantford and Simcoe, MPP Levac and myself.

I spent time in Afghanistan in 1969. It was a hellhole at that time, with the heat, the dust, the sand and the rocks. The difference: no war then. So I can only imagine the tough times our military have been going through. They do it with courage, good spirit and commitment.

The ceremony reminds us that we have a duty to others, and we see that duty exemplified in the men and women in uniform.

To our troops, wherever they may be, wherever we may find them, we say thank you for your sacrifice and we send good wishes for the future.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Kormos: I want to tell you about Barbara Harrison. She's a good person who has lived all of her life playing by the rules. She's 74 years old and a widow. She lives in a small apartment in Port Colborne and survives on a meagre old age security pension and a widow's pension.

She lives in dread of her monthly hydro bill. She brought the last one to our constituency office down in Welland: $150.07. Month after month, her hydro bills have been increasing, and she's fearful about simply not having the money to pay for that electricity. The apartment is heated by natural gas.

This woman, at the age of 74, is more frugal than you and I have ever been or ever could be. She knows about turning lights off and about not wasting electricity. She knows about conservation. It's part of her DNA.

Of that $150.07 bill, of course, $17.26 of it is Mr. McGuinty's HST.

Here's a woman who has played by the rules and who is going to be forced out of her home by the Liberals in Ontario and their electricity policy that's imposing more and more debt and greater burden on hard-working folks like Barbara Harrison every day of every month of every year.

TRACY WONG

Mr. Reza Moridi: I am pleased to rise in this House today to recognize an exceptional young athlete from my riding of Richmond Hill. At the Canada Winter Games, the highest level of national competition for up-and-coming athletes, Ms. Tracy Wong won a silver medal in badminton.

Held once every two years, this year's contest took place in Halifax between February 11 and 27, 2011. These games are key in the development of Canada's young athletes, and Ontario once again showed its prominence in amateur sport by winning the Canada Winter Games flag for the 19th time.

Beyond the accolades, the community spirit of the winter games and the air of volunteerism among those involved can be celebrated from coast to coast to coast. This level of enthusiasm bodes well for Ontario's next big sporting event, the 2015 Pan American Games, which will attract thousands of jobs, tourists and investment in sport infrastructure to the province of Ontario.

This government's increased support of 162% for amateur sport has helped foster the success of young athletes at both the national and international levels.

Please join me in congratulating this remarkable young athlete on a job well done and give her your best wishes for her budding sporting career.

HUNGER

Mr. Ted Arnott: Too often, some of us take for granted one of life's most basic necessities: food. Yet even in our own province, many go without reliable access to nutritious food. People of faith are working to change that.

This morning, Anglicans from the Toronto region held a rally at the Frost building, focusing attention on hunger.

Organized by the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, this event demonstrates the church's sincere interest in ensuring that no one goes without the nourishment they need.

Last fall, the member for Whitby–Oshawa and I participated in the donated diet challenge. For three days, we ate only what a client of a food bank would eat. It isn't the diet that I would choose, but many don't have that choice. Children go to bed hungry and go to school hungry. People unable to work get by however they can, and often without a nutritious meal.

I want to congratulate the member for Sarnia–Lambton for his Bill 78 regarding the food bank donation tax credit for farmers, which would make a real difference in alleviating hunger in our communities. Regrettably, the McGuinty government is stalling this bill in committee.

To end hunger, all of us in society must be part of the solution. Families, individuals, churches, schools, community organizations and, of course, governments at all levels all have important responsibilities to our fellow citizens.

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I would suggest that the words of Isaiah are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago: "And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like noonday." Let's work towards finding that light in the darkness.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA FEMME

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Tuesday, March 8, marked International Women's Day. The origins of this celebration date back to the beginning of the 20th century in Europe and the United States. This event was made official by the United Nations in order to encourage every country around the world to celebrate and honour women's rights.

La Journée internationale de la femme met en lumière des femmes ordinaires qui ont fait l'histoire.

In my riding, I was delighted to host Laurel Broten, our minister responsible for women's issues, for a celebration of women in our community who are committed to the advancement of women and girls in Ontario.

I would like to acknowledge the following 13 women from my riding: Linda Carrière-Séguin and Lise Clark from Alfred-Plantagenet; Julie Bourgeois et Francyn Leblanc from Casselman; Helen MacLeod from Champlain; Denise Dallaire-Coulombe of Clarence-Rockland; Anne Comtois Lalonde of Hawkesbury; Linda Rozon and Linda Séguin from East Hawkesbury; Annie Levac from North Glengarry; Estelle Patenaude of Hawkesbury; Mary McCuaig of The Nation; and Georgette Patenaude of Vars.

The outstanding performance and leadership of these women is a strong model for all of us.

TIM HORTONS BRIER

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to congratulate the city of London for hosting the 2011 Tim Hortons Brier. This event is the Canadian men's national curling championship. It began this past Saturday and will run until Sunday, March 13.

I would like also to acknowledge the hard work done by Peter Inch, chair of the 2011 Tim Hortons Brier host committee, the members of his committee and all the volunteers. They have put together an incredible event. I had the opportunity to attend the opening ceremonies this past Saturday, and it was fantastic.

The Brier is having a very positive impact on tourism and the local economy: 60% of the 100,000 tickets sold were purchased by people from outside the London area, and the direct economic impact for the city of London and surrounding area is estimated at $20 million.

Along with the 2010 Olympic gold medal team from Alberta, there are two teams representing Ontario at this year's Brier: one from the Coldwater and District Curling Club and one from the Soo Curlers Association of Sault Ste. Marie. I wish them all luck and success and the best in this event. I also want to congratulate the city of London and all the municipalities that participate in this event.

Mr. Speaker, before I finish—I have about 10 seconds—I would like to congratulate and wish all the pages good luck in their future. I want to thank them for supporting us for the last three weeks, bringing the water and all the paper we need. All luck and success, and hopefully we will see you again in this place, taking our jobs.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Bob Delaney: The leader of the Conservative Party's brand of vicious personal attack politics yesterday delivered an open-handed slap in the face to the millions of Ontarians and their friends and families who grapple with addiction and mental health issues.

In his usual snide and insensitive manner, the Conservative leader equated the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of a statement that I made in this chamber on Monday, asking that we be respectful to one another. Twice in his statement now, the honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville has made some comments that I don't think are respectful to the Leader of the Opposition. I'd just ask that he would be conscious of that during the remainder of his statement, please.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

The Conservative Party presents to Ontarians a future with no room in their tomorrow for the one in five Ontarians who will confront a mental health issue in their lifetime. This is indeed the same Conservative leader who made up a story about patients being treated in a garage at Credit Valley Hospital.

Our province has asked a special expert advisory group to help build a mental health and addictions system

to provide the right supports when Ontarians need them and as close to their homes as possible. Ontario will develop and deliver a 10-year comprehensive strategy to make life better for those Ontarians.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I will reserve my time for ministers' statements.

SICKLE CELL AND THALASSEMIA CARE ONTARIO ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR TRAITEMENT DES AFFECTIONS DRÉPANOCYTAIRES ET DES THALASSÉMIES ONTARIO

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to establish Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Care Ontario and to proclaim Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Awareness Day / Projet de loi 165, Loi créant Traitement des affections drépanocytaires et des thalassémies Ontario et proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation aux affections drépanocytaires et aux thalassémies.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Mike Colle: Some of these names are difficult, but the diseases are more difficult than the name.

This bill establishes Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Care Ontario as a corporation without share capital. The objects of the corporation include taking measures to improve the coordination and quality of health care for individuals who have sickle cell/thalassemic disorders and promote awareness of these disorders, and to essentially create an umbrella to give comprehensive care for people with sickle cell anemia and thalassemia.

The bill, if passed, would also proclaim June 19 each year as Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Awareness Day in the province of Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(e), the Speaker shall put the questions on the two ballot items to be considered during private members' public business on Thursday, March 10, 2011, after the conclusion of debate on ballot item number 69.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have the honour to present for consideration of this House a bill to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000.

Ontario's sex offender registry, the first of its kind in Canada, was sparked by the tragic 1988 murder of 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson at the hands of a convicted pedophile on federal statutory release.

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At the inquest into Christopher's death, the coroner's jury recommended creating a national registry for convicted sex offenders, requiring that they register with their local police service as soon as they are released from jail. In April 2000, the Ontario government passed Christopher's Law, 2000, to establish and maintain a registry of sex offenders that police can use proactively for investigative purposes. The act was proclaimed into force on April 23, 2001.

I would like to note that in the gallery today we have with us Christopher's father, Jim Stephenson. Jim, we welcome you to the House today.

On April 1, 2004, the federal government created a national sex offender registry. Since then, Ontario has asked the federal government for changes to the national registry to make it as comprehensive as the Ontario registry. These changes are reflected in Bill S-2, which received royal assent on December 9, 2010. When Bill S-2 is proclaimed, there will be differences between the

registries in several areas which the government wants to address, including reporting obligations, addition of offenders convicted outside of Canada and addition of offenders pardoned under the Criminal Records Act.

The bill I am introducing today would, if passed, align Christopher's Law with the recent changes to the federal registry by removing existing legislative offender reporting timelines of 15 days; adding a new regulation-making authority to prescribe the timelines for reporting in sections 3 and 7 of the act; requiring offenders who have been convicted of a sex offence outside of Canada and who have been ordered to report to the national registry to also report to the Ontario registry; and allowing the Ontario registry to maintain the records of registered offenders who receive a pardon under the Criminal Records Act.

These changes would align the Ontario sex offender registry with the national sex offender registry legislation as amended by Bill S-2. These amendments, if adopted, will maintain smooth and efficient sharing of Ontario's sex registry information with the federal registry.

Today, we have a sex offender registry in Ontario with a 97% compliance rate, one of the highest rates of any sex offender registry in all of North America. The Ontario registry is an effective tool to help police investigate sex crimes and monitor offenders in the community.

We would welcome the support of all members of the Legislative Assembly for this legislation.

NUTRITION MONTH

Hon. Margarett R. Best: March is Nutrition Month in Canada. This month gives our government the opportunity to spotlight healthy eating and nutrition and to encourage Ontarians to make healthier food choices for themselves, their children and their families.

The Dietitians of Canada led the national Nutrition Month campaign for more than 30 years. This year's theme is "From Field to Table," which aligns with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs's Foodland Ontario campaigns, highlighting Ontario's farmers, food producers and local offerings.

Our government wants to increase awareness of the fact that making healthier food choices, such as making healthy homemade meals and snacks, eating less prepackaged or fast food meals, reducing salt intake, and eating more fruits and vegetables can reduce the incidence of obesity and prevent heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some types of cancer.

Our government's healthy communities fund provides additional support for projects that focus on physical activity and healthy eating, among other government priorities. Since 2009, $22 million has been awarded through the healthy communities fund to more than 360 organizations to deliver programs benefiting approximately one million Ontarians.

The Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport is helping Ontarians make informed decisions about their most important asset: their health. To support Ontarians in all regions, the EatRight Ontario program provides free access to registered dietitians via telephone and through an integrated website. EatRight Ontario also offers a menu planner, an interactive online tool that can help Ontarians prepare nutritious meals and snacks, achieve and maintain healthy weights, and eat the recommended servings from all five food groups, as noted in Canada's Food Guide.

To further encourage healthy eating by our children, the ministry provides funding for more than 300 Ontario after-school programs, reaching over 18,000 children and youth in high-priority neighbourhoods across the province. Through this program, young Ontarians have access to healthy after-school snacks, as well as nutritious education and other health-related programs in a variety of community settings such as schools and community and recreation centres.

To further support healthy eating in remote regions of our province, our northern fruit and vegetable program is currently providing 18,000 children in 110 schools with two weekly servings of fruit and vegetables. As well, the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport has been working with a variety of ministries and partners to ensure that school vending machines offer healthy options and that food in cafeterias is trans-fat free. Also, Ontario's schools will have standards of nutrition in place.

The Ontario government is working to make our schools healthier places to learn. Nutrition Month is a perfect time to get on the right track with healthy eating. Ontarians are encouraged as much as possible to buy local, eat fresh and be informed about the foods and beverages they eat and drink.

On Monday, the federal Minister of Health announced a national dialogue on healthy weights. We are pleased that the Harper government has finally joined us in our fight against obesity. Our government has been leading a seven-year effort to help families and children lead healthy, active lives, and I call on the opposition to support our efforts.

As our Ontario athletes return home from the Canada Games, I welcome them as role models. As world-class athletes, they keep their bodies and minds in tip-top shape by eating healthy food and embracing physical activity, and they returned home with the Canada Games flag. This is integral to the success of the athletes, and certainly they are great role models, again, for our children.

Healthy eating is an important investment in the individual, community and overall health of our great province. Indeed, our health is our wealth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to stand today and comment on the speech by the minister on the amendments to the Ontario sex offender registry. On behalf of Tim Hudak and our caucus, Mr. Stephenson, I'd like to welcome you here. You've truly shown leadership on this file from the very beginning, and we really appreciate that.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the Legislature, this was a bill brought forward originally by David Tsubouchi under the Mike Harris government. We are very proud of the Ontario sex offender registry and Christopher's Law. We know that over the years it's done remarkable improvements for Ontario citizens and been a very positive influence.

I've actually toured the Ontario sex offender registry at OPP general headquarters on three or four occasions, and I've been shown how the information they collected can be dispersed. If there is an offender having any kind of a problem where they should have reported, they can almost immediately identify the area, within a few people, where that offender may be.

With all the information that's been collected over 10 years, it's also become an investigative and crime prevention tool for the police services in Ontario. I can tell you that, talking to staff members who work at the Ontario sex offender registry—they're people who are very proud of their work and dedicated to making sure that this system, which we believe could well be the best sex offender registry anywhere in North America, can be improved upon at any time.

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It's also interesting to note that this year is the 10th anniversary. They've had 10 years of collecting valuable information to help our police services.

I'm also told that many police chiefs from across the province are going to the Ontario sex offender registry, looking for information that they can use—in other cases, in other police services outside of the province of Ontario.

Because this bill aligns itself with Bill S-2, there's no question that we will be supporting this. We want to make sure that the Ontario sex offender registry we have today is improved upon as a great one for the future as well.

NUTRITION MONTH

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It is my pleasure to rise today to respond to the Nutrition Month statement by the Minister of Health Promotion.

I'd like to thank the Dietitians of Canada, who have led this campaign for more than 30 years.

This month provides us with the opportunity to raise awareness about the need to live healthy lives through eating healthy foods. Unfortunately, the consequences of unhealthy diets are very serious.

This year's theme for Nutrition Month is "Celebrate Food ... from Field to Table!" This is a very appropriate reminder of the fact that much of our food does come from the field, and we need to celebrate that.

I also want to say that this is an opportunity to educate all Ontarians and encourage them to expand their nutritional horizons. Most of us do indulge in unhealthy treats from time to time, but hopefully we recognize, and we can encourage others to recognize, that that must not become the norm. We do know that healthy diets and lifestyles not only provide us with slimmer waistlines, but they lessen the burden on our health care system and, ultimately, increase our life expectancy.

I'd just like to talk about life expectancy at this point in time. This is an issue that has been raised recently by the Ontario Medical Association. According to their research, the life expectancy of children who are obese may not be as long as that of their parents if the rates of obesity continue to skyrocket.

Obesity is a serious problem, and we have some of the highest rates here, and we have to combat it. It also increases the likelihood of adulthood diabetes.

What we must do during this month is enlighten not just adults, but also our children, about the need to eat healthy. Then, hopefully, we can decrease the rates of obesity and also the rates of diabetes in our province.

Today, on behalf of our caucus, I'd like to commend the dietitians for their commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle. We can achieve better results and healthier lives.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos: On behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park, I'm pleased to respond to the Solicitor General today.

I recall the process of the Christopher's Law legislation through this House, and I recall participating in the debate as well as the committee hearings that considered it. I look forward to the committee hearings around this legislation as well.

There are two areas of serious omission that continue to make the sex offender registry in Ontario less than it should be. One is the omission of convicted persons who were young offenders. What that means is that a person who is 17 and 11 months old, who is convicted of even a serious sex offence, is immunized from being listed on the sex offender registry. We list people on the registry so that we can identify people who pose a threat to the community, and so that we can locate them in a speedy way when somebody is at risk or has been harmed. New Democrats think it's a serious omission to not include young offenders who have been convicted of sex offences on the registry.

The other element that remains of concern is the absence of retroactivity. We welcome the inclusion of persons convicted outside of the country, but the absence of retroactivity—and I appreciate that as time progresses, that will be eliminated. Still, at the age of only 10 years, this particular legislation—what it says is that there's a huge number of sex offenders in the community, in the country, in the province, who aren't registered because their convictions occurred before the creation of the sex offender registry.

I'm looking forward to the committee on this; I don't expect a protracted debate on second reading. We will be addressing it in the House on second reading. I'm confident that the minister will ensure that the bill goes to committee. We're looking forward to addressing some of those specific concerns during the course of committee hearings.

NUTRITION MONTH

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Health Promotion on nutrition week, I have to say that I listened to her with some incredible awe and disbelief as she spoke. It's not because of what she said, because we all believe we should be eating homemade foods, that we should have less salt, that there should be more fruit and vegetables. Certainly, we all believe there should be healthy snacks and a healthy weight and that people should eat all five groups of food, but how little this government has done to make this a reality for so many of our citizens.

I listened to her, and she talked about two servings a week going to First Nations reserves in northern Ontario. The healthy eating guide says you should have five a day. This is the government's plan, to give them two a week? That is like 6% of what they're supposed to get.

Today, this very day, before question period, there was a group of Anglican ministers and parishioners who were out in front of the finance minister's office. They were protesting that this government has done nothing to stop hunger and nothing to make sure that people eat healthy foods. They are asking for a $100-a-month supplement so that they can buy fresh fruit and vegetables, so that they can eat healthy food. This government has done nothing, absolutely nothing, to let that happen. They want to do what this government is suggesting that we all do. They want to be able to give themselves and their children the kinds of food that will make them healthy and productive. They want to eat carrots. They want to eat lettuce. They want to eat simple things that we all take for granted, but you can't get those from the food bank.

This government has done nothing around all of the important issues: calorie labelling, so that people know how many calories are in the food. They've done nothing on a ban on advertising to children on junk food. They have done absolutely nothing on the whole issue of farmer tax credits, which—my friend the member from Sarnia has a bill in this House, and they've done nothing at all to make sure that farmers can get tax credits to donate surplus food, rather than plowing it back into the ground, so that the poor can actually eat some good food and decent food. They have done absolutely nothing on local food procurement.

So I ask the minister—yes, it's important to tell us all to eat food. Yes, it's important we do it. Yes, it's important; absolutely. The dietitians are right. But surely that applies to the poor. Surely that applies to First Nations communities. Until it does, then you're not including all Ontarians. You're not including the people who tend to be the most vulnerable. When this government starts to do this, maybe we'll all pay more attention to what the minister has to say.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to give the member from Eglinton–Lawrence an opportunity—I understand that some of his guests were delayed for the introduction of his bill, and I will give you that chance to introduce them.

Mr. Mike Colle: I thank the House. They were just rushing upstairs.

As you know, I introduced the bill on the Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Care Ontario Act. The real heroes behind the passionate fight for sickle cell and thalassemia patients in Ontario are here with me. I just want to introduce them, and some of you may know them.

First of all, there's Ms. Lillie Johnson, who is the founder of the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario. She just received the Order of Ontario last month. Ms. Lillie Johnson is here. We also have Dr. Isaac Odame, who is a specialist in haematology at Sick Kids hospital; Dr. Rob Frankford, who used to sit in this House, a long-time advocate of sickle cell care; Sherman Moore, who is a sickle cell survivor, who is doing this for his late sister Gloria, and he tells an incredible story; Riyad Elbard, who is the president of the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada; Joseph Bodun Macaulay, who is the president of the Sickle Cell Foundation of Canada-Eglinton Community Support Group; the world-famous George Marcello, who just got back from Phoenix, Arizona, where he is trying to help save people from that new legislation there in Arizona, and he's in the House, from Step by Step and from Torch of Life; Yvonne Clarke, who is from Camp Jumoke, which raises money for kids with sickle cell; and from the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario, Isatu Bah is here, and Neneh-Iye Bundu is here. Thank you all. I hope I didn't miss anybody. Don is also here, their great cameraman. Thank you so much.

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MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: My point of order relates to standing order 23(i), specifically in response to the statement by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. I was tempted to allow this to pass without further comment, but I'm compelled to raise it with you.

The member, in his statement, made highly offensive remarks and imputed motive, not only to the leader of the official opposition, but expressly, through his statement, to every member of the official opposition. He made specific statements that are offensive from the standpoint that he leaves the impression that the leader of the official opposition and members of the official opposition have a disdained attitude towards people in this province who are attempting to cope with mental illness.

You interrupted him, and I thank you for doing that; however, his statement stands. I believe that it would be incumbent on the member to voluntarily stand in this place and withdraw his remarks. People watching this place have no concept of what took place when the Leader of the Opposition made his remarks, and I believe that it is only fair that the member would take it upon himself and do the right thing: stand in this place and

withdraw. I believe he also owes an apology to the Leader of the Opposition and every member of the official opposition for his remarks.

I think it's important for people to know that there was a motion that was introduced as an opposition motion that in fact came to the defence of people in this province who are coping with mental illness and encouraged the government to move quickly on that issue.

Speaker, I leave it in your hands. I leave it, more importantly, in the hands of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville to do the right thing.

Mr. Ted Arnott: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: I certainly would have wanted to intervene earlier, but I didn't want to interrupt the government announcements or the responses.

The fact is, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville gave a statement in the House this afternoon that represented a calculated and scurrilous attack on another member of this House: the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook. The member for Newmarket–Aurora is absolutely right: This member, in fact, owes the House an apology.

Standing order 23(j) says that a member shall be called to order if he "charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood," and I would submit to you that during the course of his statement he actually did that. I would ask you to call him to order and ask him to withdraw that statement and to extend an apology to the members of the opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Newmarket–Aurora and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills and I remind them of the importance of the timeliness of points of order. Notwithstanding the fact that the government may have been proceeding, I would encourage you in the future, if there's something that has come to your attention that you are displeased with, to rise on that point of order.

Once again, I have, on numerous occasions within this chamber, reminded members on both sides of the House of the use of inflammatory language, because the rise in the use of language of an inflammatory nature leads to what we're experiencing right at this moment.

I did stand up and comment to the honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville at the time of my concern over some of the comments that he had made. If the honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville so chooses, if he wants to comment any further, I'll leave it with him. If not, I'm going to move forward.

PETITIONS

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township:

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found $12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition, certified by the Clerk, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I've endorsed the petition.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here, signed by a great number of people from the north end of my riding, around Hickson and Tavistock.

"The government of Ontario has directed local governments to permit industrial wind turbine installations that minimize the impact on agricultural operations.

"We, the undersigned, object to any approval of industrial wind turbines in our local municipalities until there is a full independent assessment to address the viability of industrial wind power, the impact of construction on wildlife and the environment, as well as the adverse effects on livestock, people's health, quality of life and investment in our properties. It is important for the provincial and local government to ensure that all concerns are addressed before the construction of wind turbines permanently changes our community."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to read that petition.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Mr. Barry Burton of Creemore for sending me this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Collingwood Street bridge, built in 1913, located in the township of Clearview, in the county of Simcoe, is scheduled for destruction and replacement;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To have the bridge declared to have significant historical value under the Heritage Act, protecting it from destruction; and

"To have the bridge restored while maintaining the existing structure."

I agree with the petition and will sign it.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition regarding paved shoulders on provincial highways, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas" the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's "private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That" the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's "private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I give this to Ira.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's a petition that has been in circulation for quite a length of time, but on behalf of the citizen that presented it to me, Rebecca Gingrich of 11 Church St. in Princeton, I want to present it, as it just arrived in my office recently. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families are struggling to help put their kids through university;

"Whereas students in Ontario graduate with an average $26,000 in debt and have the highest tuition and largest class sizes in the country; and

"Whereas Ontario tax dollars should be kept in Ontario to help Ontario students, not sent overseas;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the McGuinty government to cancel its plan to give foreign students scholarships of $40,000 a year and reinvest these funds in scholarships for Ontario students."

I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

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PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition on behalf of Simcoe county paramedics.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from" the Hospitals of Ontario Pension Trust and the OPSEU Trust "to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of credited service; and

"Whereas, when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

"Whereas the government's own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

"Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Finance support Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson's resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions to OMERS from" the Hospitals of Ontario Pension Plan or OPSEU Trust.

I agree with the petition and will sign it.

LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it is from people in Kitchener-Waterloo, London and Guelph. It says,

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to the cuts to the literacy and basic skills program. We recognize education as a basic human right. We acknowledge the volunteers who have dedicated their time to helping people overcome these obstacles."

I here affix my signature and agree.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas soaring hydro costs across the province are making electricity unaffordable for many hard-working Ontario families and seniors;

"Whereas energy experts suggest that over the course of 2010" and 2011, "residential hydro bills in Ontario will increase 26% or more, costing a minimum of $304 per year for the average homeowner;

"Whereas, over the last year alone, the McGuinty Liberal government has added $150 per household in hydro generation premiums, $50 in smart meter fees and then placed $98 in harmonized sales taxes on the average Ontario household's hydro bill;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's smart meters are forcing hard-working and busy Ontarians to pay exorbitant premiums to do regular chores, such as laundry, outside of the Premier's 'preferred' time-of-use energy schedule;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the" McGuinty Liberals "immediately reduce hydro rates for all Ontarians, cease with the time-of-use pricing and remove the HST tax placed upon electricity, as it is an essential service to hard-working Ontario families."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Ira.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical labs in Tottenham, Stayner and Elmvale and reduce lineups throughout Simcoe–Grey:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the" McGuinty "government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting $15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure timely and equal access to medical laboratories" all across Ontario.

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a great number of people in and around the great town of Tillsonburg.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families are struggling to help put their kids through university;

"Whereas students in Ontario graduate with an average $26,000 in debt and have the highest tuition and largest class sizes in the country; and

"Whereas Ontario tax dollars should be kept in Ontario to help Ontario students, not sent overseas;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the McGuinty government to cancel its plan to give foreign students scholarships of $40,000 a year and reinvest these funds in scholarships for Ontario students."

I will sign the petition, and I certainly agree with it.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL ACT, 2011
LOI DE 2011 SUR LE REPORT DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

Mr. Shurman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 143, Loi visant à accorder des reports d'impôts fonciers aux personnes âgées à faible revenu et aux personnes à faible revenu atteintes d'une invalidité.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Peter Shurman: First of all, I'd like to thank my friends the member for Welland and the member for York West for co-sponsoring this bill. They have clearly agreed with my view that it was an important step for these times.

It's also, in a very real way, the completion of a circle for me in this Legislative Assembly. I arrived here in 2007 and very quickly learned that members got a very small amount of time but nonetheless a period of time approximately once a year to debate their own personal private member's business. The first thing that I put

before the assembly at the time was Bill 72, which contemplated exactly what this bill does, but it got shot down, and the reasons it was shot down were a number of things that I hadn't contemplated.

So Bill 143 is a redo of that bill with every single one of those elements addressed, so that it now should, by all rights, be acceptable to all sides of this Legislative Assembly, and I suppose for that reason we wound up with sponsorship from all three sides.

In any event, I would like to proceed with the debate and first of all welcome to the assembly these visitors: Dominic Lee, Peggy Lee, Rene Wan, Kim Liao, Ronnie Lee, F. Jeng Lee and Anna Cheun, who are all members of the board of directors of the First Chinese Senior Association of Vaughan, in my riding. Morris Jesion of the Ontario Society (Coalition) of Senior Citizens' Organizations is also with us, and I see that a certain Carole Shurman, my wife, has just entered the assembly.

Interjection: That's your daughter, right?

Mr. Peter Shurman: No, it's not my daughter; it's my wife.

I'd like to acknowledge the support of Susan Eng, president of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, as well as Warren Carroll, a founding member of the Thornhill Seniors Centre. I'd like to acknowledge the support of Josephine Mastrodicasa, president of Concord West Seniors Club, also in the riding of Thornhill.

Approximately 49% of Ontario's population is from the baby boom generation. Many of the people in this Legislature, indeed, are from the baby boom generation, which began in 1946 and ended in 1962. Being born in 1947, I guess I'm what's called leading-edge and approaching that period of time where I'm going to be considered a senior. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we put in place conditions that assure that this cohort does not create an unnecessary burden on the health and long-term-care system.

By 2017, the largest segment of the Ontario population will be 65-plus. Think about the ramifications on the health care system, on long-term-care beds, on retirement homes, on everything that has to do with people who are in an aging milieu. That period of time will see us with the largest cohort of 65-pluses ever in Ontario.

Dignity and respect are the by-products of staying in one's own home longer. The financial benefits accrue to the entire system as well. Bill 143, a complete redo of this earlier attempt to reduce the burden on fixed-income seniors, touches every button here: It keeps people in their homes with dignity, does it at no cost to anyone at all, and makes the entire process easy. Some will say we already have property tax assistance programs, and we do, but they are neither cost-free nor uniform across the province of Ontario, and that's what we are seeking to address here.

By way of background, in 2006, Toronto had an uptake of 2,367 applicants for this city's cancellation program and 70 applicants for their deferral program. Many municipalities—and I include places like Muskoka, Niagara, Sudbury and Thunder Bay—had no participants despite very high senior citizen populations and hardship. That's because the programs are different from place to place, so there is an inconsistency, and people don't even know they exist.

1400

To date, in Canada, property tax deferral programs are offered at the provincial level in British Columbia, in Prince Edward Island and in Nova Scotia. Similar programs are offered at the state level across the United States.

In Ontario, property tax deferral programs are available at the municipal level, as prescribed through the Municipal Act, 2001, and the City of Toronto Act, 2006. My bill contemplates replacing all of that with a uniform and cost-free Ontario-wide property tax deferral system for those who require it.

This act will allow eligible owners to defer their property taxes. That doesn't mean they don't pay them; it means they defer them. This would allow them to remain in their own homes while offsetting the burden of property taxes.

The eligibility criteria are quite clear. You have to be a Canadian, you have to be an Ontario resident, or you have to be a resident for 10 years or longer. Being a senior citizen of 65-plus or a recipient of ODSP is mandatory. And the equity in the property in question must be a minimum of 25%. That's very important, because if you're going to defer payment of the property tax and it's going to be taken at the disposition of the property, there has to be some equity to go against, because there's a lien registered.

The property taxes are deferred; they are not lost. Taxes must be repaid with interest at the earliest of either the death of the owner or the change of permanent residence of the owner.

This bill comes at a time when Ontario seniors are being hit very hard. They're being hit with MPAC assessments that they never anticipated getting. They're being hit with the additional costs incurred because of HST application on things that have to be purchased for their homes. One example is electricity. Another example is heating fuel: natural gas or whatever it happens to be. They're being hit with hydro increases—and every side of this assembly has a different view of why the hydro increases are there, but nobody can deny that they are—and for people on fixed incomes, who are mostly 65-plus and retired, it hurts.

Property tax increases also play a part. Property taxes are rarely stable for very long, so if those rise again, that fixed income, generally the result of a nest egg, oftentimes one that has been hit hard over the past couple of years during the recession—it creates a further problem in terms of ability to pay. Ability to pay is what drives this bill. This bill, then, offers Ontario seniors the dignity and the respect that they deserve after contributing so much to their province and to their society.

There's broad-based community support for this type of approach. The First Chinese Senior Association of Vaughan, well represented here today, has said in a letter

to me, "Living on fixed incomes, many members of the seniors' club would be eligible ... this would be a great relief."

The Thornhill Seniors Centre, which has been there a long time and is very active—there are over 1,000 members, most of them living in their own homes—has said, "Coupled with spiralling energy costs and HST on services previously not taxed, some of our members worry about keeping their homes."

I can assure you, and I think everybody in this Legislature, from all sides and from all corners of the province, would agree—you've all received letters, you've all received emails, and all of them do more than allude to that; they say, "You know what? I'm in jeopardy." There are many cases like that.

From the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP: Susan Eng, whom I mentioned earlier, couldn't be with us today, but says in her letter, "With energy costs expected to rise precipitously over the coming years, a property tax deferral program should help older Ontarians stay in their homes longer and with greater financial security."

Regardless of what you're talking about in this Legislature, whether you're talking about the availability of long-term-care beds, whether you're talking about alternate level of care, whether you're talking about retirement homes and the ability to accommodate people, or whether you're talking about home care and the ability to deliver services to people—all of these things come into play, and all of us want to keep our seniors in their homes for a longer period of time. Goodness knows, the seniors themselves want the ability to live independently and with dignity in a place that they, through their sweat and tears, have purchased—usually the largest single purchase in anybody's life—and maintained, and they want to be able to continue to maintain it.

In terms of disability, a disability should not be a prison sentence. People who are able to live in their own homes should be entitled to this small element of respite or relief. The bill restores dignity and respect to a segment of the population that struggles with a stigma every single day.

This bill addresses the disparity in the rollout of social services in Ontario's numerous and diverse regions by creating an environment where people with disabilities can receive services in their own homes and not in an institutionalized setting, at no cost to anyone—no cost to the taxpayer, no cost to government coffers.

Bill 143 helps to keep seniors living in their own homes with respect and dignity. This bill would help reduce government spending. It would alleviate the pressures on retirement facilities by reducing the number of residents who would be in need of them.

Bill 143 has already received the support of my cosponsors, one a Liberal and one from the NDP. It is clear that tax relief for seniors and persons with disabilities is needed now, and it transcends partisanship. When I presented the precursor to this bill, we hadn't gone into a recession yet; now we have, and people on fixed incomes derive those fixed incomes from investments that are no longer as large as they once were. We have to remember that.

The bill helps to protect seniors and persons with disabilities, who have given so much to society throughout their lives. This is a method for the province to be able to give back to them with a hand up, not a handout.

By mandating property tax deferrals for low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities, we are ensuring that the most vulnerable members of our community are able to remain in their own homes and maintain the level of dignity to which they are entitled.

Bill 143 is about making Ontario affordable for all Ontarians. Neither low-income seniors nor persons with disabilities should be put at a disadvantage. They deserve, and are entitled, to remain in their own homes. Considering that under Dalton McGuinty, the wait-list for long-term-care beds has more than doubled, to over 25,000, it would seem that the only option the McGuinty government has is to support seniors living in their own homes longer.

If that doesn't make the difference, consider this: The province invests tax dollars and reaps interest from those investments. There's always some amount of churn or money in the bank. With Bill 143's passage, some of that investment becomes the investment of money in virtual loans through deferred taxes, at a rate of return commensurate with the marketplace.

There's no reason to deny these people that opportunity, and there's no reason, from a cost perspective, to deny it either.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon on Bill 143—I thank the member from Thornhill for his comments—and to have the opportunity to be part of the discussion.

I wanted to start by talking about the proposed bill. I am concerned, of course, about the cost of the bill. We heard the member say that, in his words, there's no cost to the government coffers. I do have concerns that there will be costs to the government coffers.

The proposed bill would require the province to establish a new property tax deferral program for low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities. The proposed bill provides that annual property taxes—which include municipal taxes, education taxes, provincial land taxes, for instance, where applicable—would be deferred to a maximum of $5,000, as we heard, upon the approval of the application to the Minister of Finance. The repayment of the deferral with interest would take place upon the death of the owner or transfer of the property from a surviving spouse.

Under the proposed bill, it appears that the province would, in fact, bear the costs of the creation and administration of the deferral program. I reiterate the concern about the cost of establishing something like this.

The proposed bill would provide an eligible applicant, as we heard, with deferrals of up to $5,000, but it would

provide the homeowner with a generalized tax break, which, combined with interest, would carry a significant cumulative cost. Again, I go back to the costs, and I think that's something we can all agree should be a concern.

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The operational issues, specifically, that occur: Municipalities would have to finance the cost of the deferral as well—as I just said the province would—of the municipal portion of the taxes. Again, that's going to cost the municipalities money. Under the proposed bill, I just wanted to add that the province may register a lien on properties, which would likely be viewed negatively by seniors and by the disabled.

I wanted to just go over the municipal mitigation programs. Currently, through the property tax system, municipalities are required to provide relief from reassessment-related property tax increases to homeowners who are, or whose spouses are, low-income seniors or low-income disabled persons. The eligibility criteria and the form of the tax relief, of course, are at the discretion of the municipality. The authority gives municipalities the flexibility to respond to the particular circumstances of each of the ratepayers.

The municipalities can also provide property tax relief to residential property owners whose taxes are what are called "unduly burdensome." The eligibility criteria of something being unduly burdensome and the amount of relief are determined by the municipality.

I think it's important to look at the larger picture as well in what already exists. To go back to the comments of the member from Thornhill, he did acknowledge that we do have existing programs that also are not cost-free, so kudos to him for acknowledging that. Some of those programs are great programs that support our seniors, our disabled and our persons of lower income in the province of Ontario.

For instance, we know the Ontario energy and property tax credit is delivering almost $1.3 billion in annual support, so $1.3 billion per year to low- and middle-income people in Ontario and to seniors. Ontarians who own or rent a home can receive up to $900 in tax relief, and the number that seniors can receive in tax relief is up to $1,025.

Before I go on, I wanted to, of course, welcome the members from the Chinese seniors' association of Thornhill for your advocacy and what you do in my area of Kitchener–Conestoga, which serves Wellesley, Wilmot, Woolwich and all of south Kitchener.

I have John Thompson as chair of CARP locally in chapter 25. Talking about initiatives like the Ontario energy and property tax credit, John has this to say: "In my opinion, the Ontario energy and property tax credit ... for seniors is a very positive, progressive and compassionate strategy to assist Ontario seniors," many of whom are on fixed incomes.

"A tax break for the necessities of life—shelter and energy—will provide additional personal resources for seniors to enhance their quality of life in other discretionary aspects of their personal budgets.

"The credit increase for seniors is a wise decision to assist those who have, over their adult lives, contributed so much to the prosperity of the province of Ontario."

It's important that we continue to focus on the good things that are happening, the benefits that our seniors are receiving in the province currently, and I'll leave it for my colleague to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege to have the opportunity to rise to speak in support of my colleague from Thornhill and Bill 143, which will make a positive impact on the lives, clearly, of so many who need it.

I'm also proud to be part of a PC caucus that's committed to real tax relief for hard-working Ontario families. Heaven knows that after eight years of Dalton McGuinty's government, they need it. They've been hit with the HST, hydro increases and soaring MPAC assessments, to name a few among the litany of reasons why it's becoming increasingly costly to live in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Few groups are suffering more out there than low-income seniors and low-income people with a disability who are living in their own homes.

I know there are seniors and disabled folks in my own riding of Leeds–Grenville who will be watching the debate today very closely. I hear from these people every week when they contact my office to talk about the fact that they're worried about being able to maintain their dream of home ownership. They're excited at the prospect of anything that will allow them to maintain their independence as long as they are physically able to do so.

What's great about my colleague's bill today is that it targets two very vulnerable groups. It offers them a chance to take a time out and catch up on the bills that keep raining down upon them, by deferring their property taxes.

I know that in some parts of Ontario residents have had the opportunity to take advantage of this deferral program. This bill will ensure that Ontarians who qualify will have the opportunity to get some relief.

I note with interest that it has been co-sponsored by the member for Welland and the member for York West. It's great to see that those two individuals are supporting the initiatives of the member for Thornhill. I know that if the government does the right thing and gets behind Bill 143, it will prevent seniors and disabled Ontarians from facing that terrible day when they'll lose their independence simply because they can't afford to pay a municipal property tax bill right away.

Keeping people independent in their own homes is clearly good for the individuals themselves, but let's not ignore that it's beneficial for society as well. When people are forced out of their homes, they turn to institutions like long-term-care facilities that are already finding themselves increasingly unable to cope with the demand for their services. Certainly in my riding there are long wait lists for long-term-care homes and for affordable housing. It makes no sense to add to that demand when

the no-cost solution being proposed is at hand. Again, I want to commend the member for Thornhill.

No one would argue that it's not in everyone's best interest to create an environment in which people can afford to live independently at home for as long as their health will allow. It's particularly important that we create these conditions now. At a time when our population is aging, we must prepare the groundwork to take the pressure off our long-term-care and health systems. This bill, I believe, can be an important part of those efforts.

I'm delighted to speak in support of this bill presented by the member from Thornhill, which gives low-income seniors and disabled residents of Ontario a fair chance of maintaining the dream of home ownership. I only hope that the government opposite will also recognize the value of what's in this bill and work hard to see it adopted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: This bill embodies a good idea, a sound proposition and a timely proposal. Its sponsor, Peter Shurman, the member for Thornhill, should be applauded and commended for bringing it into this chamber.

I'm grateful to the member for Thornhill for allowing me to be a co-sponsor. I recall speaking to his proposition when he first put it on the floor of this chamber and supporting it then. I also recall my disappointment, my amazement, my shock at how government members were disinclined to share the enthusiasm that so many on this side of the House had for the Shurman proposal in its first incarnation.

As the sponsor, Mr. Shurman, points out, he has addressed, in the course of drafting Bill 143, all of those concerns that were raised last time around, which is why I sit here—I stand now, but a few minutes ago I was sitting while I was listening to the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Finance read the notes that had been prepared for her by the ministry. I want you to know that I like that member. I have a great deal of affection for the member for Kitchener–Conestoga and I want her mother to know it. I understand that, as the parliamentary assistant, she has to do things that she may find somewhat distasteful from time to time. I'm hoping that today is one of those days.

I don't want to read anything into her demeanour, but I do note that when she delivered her address on behalf of, I presume, the Minister of Finance, she didn't do it with the same enthusiasm and personality that usually accompanies her addresses in this chamber.

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I'm hoping—sometimes against hope—that this wasn't marching orders from the ministry. I'm hoping that government backbenchers understand that this is private members' public business and that these sorts of votes should not be whipped.

Why, for the life of me, would members of this assembly want to throw a wet blanket, want to dampen, want to obstruct a good idea from Mr. Shurman? Beats me. It rots my socks to think that Thursday afternoon of each week, when private members' public business is debated—it just curls my hair to see partisan interest intervening and obstructing good, sound ideas like the proposal from Mr. Shurman today.

Look, the reality is that people are already deferring their property taxes. They do it by simply not paying them. Well, it's the case. I've talked to several municipal finance department clerks, the people who work the front desk, the people who take your taxes, guys down in small-town—the real Ontario, where you and I come from, Speaker. People go to their city hall, they line up at the counter and they pay their taxes. They know the name of the clerk, and the clerk almost inevitably knows them. It's hello and there's a little bit of chitter-chatter, and then the people pay their taxes. It's as much a social event as it is anything else.

Several municipal clerks have told me that they have never seen a higher rate of default on property tax payments—never before. I'm talking about clerks with experiences of 15, 20 and 25 years in their city halls. That's pretty disturbing stuff.

You see, people are already deferring their property taxes. The problem is that they're paying outrageous, usurious interest on the deferred taxes. The problem is that after three years, of course, the hammer comes down, and your property is at risk of being sold in a tax sale.

In fact, because there isn't a program like the one Mr. Shurman contemplates and proposes today, municipalities feel highly pressured to proceed with the process, which means literally a tax sale. Then you've got these incredible scenarios right out of the Depression era with the sheriff loading people's furniture out on to the street while they're being dispossessed.

We're not talking about scofflaws. We're not talking about people who are irresponsible. We're not talking about people who are burying their money somewhere in the Cayman Islands and trying to scam their municipality. We're talking being hard-working folks. We're talking about people who have built their homes, at least where I come from. A big chunk of the houses in Welland and Port Colborne and Thorold and Wainfleet are homes that people built with their own hands and paid for. If they sent kids to college and university, they usually paid for them twice, because there was a second round. Just about the time your kids are old enough to start going to college or university, you've got your first mortgage, the first round, paid off. Then you get another mortgage to pay college and university costs for your kid or kids.

I talked earlier today about Mrs. Harrison down in Port Colborne, with monthly hydro bills climbing every month, this most recent month $150.07, one of the largest single chunks of that being $17.26 of Mr. McGuinty's new HST.

This legislation contains safeguards, because Mr. Shurman very skilfully and wisely has imposed that

minimum 25% equity. What that means is that the person utilizing the program that Mr. Shurman proposes would only be able to defer taxes up to the point where their equity was brought down to 25% and no less than that. At that point, it wouldn't happen.

Let's look at this in the real world. Let's look at some of the examples of people who are going to use this modest proposal by Mr. Shurman—modest but, oh, so appropriate.

I do want to mention that Mr. Shurman demonstrates with this bill what it means to be a good member of provincial Parliament. The member from Thornhill shows us and the audience today what being a good MPP is all about. It's about participating in the debates of government bills and analyzing them and, if need be, criticizing them, opposing them when they're bad or trying to make them better when they could be better, but it's also about bringing ideas to the chamber.

Here we've got a good idea, and I say it's good enough at the very least to be sent to committee for further consideration, and to be sent to committee so that folks like the folks sitting in the visitors' gallery here today have a chance to speak themselves to this proposal contained in Mr. Shurman's Bill 143. If this doesn't receive second reading today, this chamber is denying seniors, persons with disabilities, people like the people sitting in our visitors' gallery today—this assembly is denying those people the right, I say, to speak about Mr. Shurman's Bill 143 and what it means to them and to talk about ways in which maybe it could be improved.

I say to the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Finance, she of the wet blanket today, that that would be her opportunity on behalf of the government and the Minister of Finance to discuss with the committee in a public way, in a transparent way, amendments that might make the bill better. I can't speak for the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Shurman, but I suspect he'd welcome that. I suspect that the sponsor of the bill, Peter Shurman, would enthusiastically accept not only commentary but even criticism if its purpose and its design and its goal was to ensure that this good idea contained in Bill 143 becomes a reality.

Let's look at some examples. Because of the nature of the bill and the reality of folks out there who are struggling, and the fact that this is capped at $5,000, you're going to have people who perhaps realize they have maybe only one or two more years to live in their home. You're not going to have people utilizing this proposal 20 years into it, because there's a limit of having to maintain 25% equity and there's a limit of $5,000 per year. What this will mean is that those folks who can live at home in their senior years but for the fact that they can't afford to live in their own home that they paid for once, and probably twice if they sent kids to college and university, might enjoy one, two or three more years in that home.

Well, let's talk about costs, shall we? It's a hell of a lot less expensive for somebody to live in their own home than for somebody to live in a long-term-care facility, never mind those long-term-care wings of hospitals. It makes a lot more sense to help people live in their own homes both in terms of the humanity of it and the morality of it as well as, if you want to be that way, the dollars and cents of it. It makes a lot more sense to help people live in their homes until they reach that point where they do need some other living accommodation that supports them in their most senior years.

So I'm here. I'm going to be voting for this bill enthusiastically. I encourage other members to vote for it. Once again, I thank Mr. Shurman for letting me be a cosponsor. I want to make it clear that this is his idea and his proposal, and he and his constituents should be very proud of him for bringing this to this Legislature today. I look forward to its passage and its appearance in committee.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to enter the debate on Bill 143, the Property Tax Deferral Act, 2011, which was brought by the member from Thornhill for the second time, and this time he came with some kind of sponsorship from the NDP and Liberal Party members. I know he's passionate about this issue; that's why he brought it again.

All of us in this House bring issues to debate. Especially today, we're talking about seniors. We owe seniors respect and it's our obligation and duty to give them whatever we can to support them to live in their homes with comfort and dignity.

I just want to speak a little bit about the HST and hydro. The member knows we doubled the tax credit for seniors to $500 per senior. Also, we gave home energy tax credits for seniors and low income, and everyone making less than $160,000 can get a 1% credit on $36,000. All together, if you want to combine it, every senior across the province of Ontario would benefit from $1,025 in their income tax return every year. When you do taxes you can see it. I'm not creating anything. The people of Ontario will know, I guess, now that it's tax season, exactly how much they're getting back. That's not the issue.

The issue here is how we can support seniors in the province of Ontario. It's a good, important topic. I studied it very well and I want to support them. If you defer your taxes and the municipality is responsible, they have to pay interest. The interest will cost 15% across the province of Ontario, because municipal interest rates are higher than banks. You can go to the bank, have a reverse mortgage and you can get it at a lower rate. Any seniors who have equity—$100,000, $150,000, it depends where you live—easily can go to the bank and the bank will give you a reverse mortgage at a lower rate.

We are debating this issue here to find a solution for seniors. Why do we have to create those issues for seniors to go to the municipality, defer taxes and make it a complicated issue for municipalities? The municipalities live off the taxes they collect on a regular basis to

support the municipalities. If 200, 300, 1,000 or 2,000 seniors go to the municipalities and ask for deferrals, it would cost them revenue, which means less income for the municipalities, which means less ability to serve the people of these municipalities.

Another thing: This ability for municipalities to defer taxes already exists. Toronto exercised their right. You are in the city of Toronto.

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm talking about—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: You're cheating these people and you know it, Peter.

Interjections.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the issue is not against my colleague opposite from Thornhill. We have open debate here. We want the best solution for seniors to remain living in their homes. I think our obligation is to find a suitable place for them, to give them the health care assistance they need, to give them the support and the protection they need, all the elements in our capacity to support them to live in their homes with dignity and respect.

It's not an issue of, "Against them, with me, get the member from the Liberal side, the NDP side and the Conservative side, which means the bill will be perfect, let's go pass it." The issue is how we can find a workable solution for all of us to support seniors.

I looked at this bill and I spoke in the past in 2008 when he introduced it the first time under number 78 and debated it in 2009 under Bill 171, property tax deferral. I'm looking at my speech and I don't think anything changed since that time. I'd love to support your bill but what's your premise? I don't see any need and reason just to play with the minds of seniors and people of Ontario. We have to find them a complete solution, not just talk and no action. The action is when we're trying to do an action, when we are trying to propose bills. We have to find concrete solutions that can solve and help the seniors to remain in their homes.

What did I see in this bill? Nothing. We ask them to defer the taxes until a different time. Then how much is the interest, I ask my colleague? The interest is about 15%. It's easier for to you go to the bank; you get it for 3% or 4%. More importantly, you have no obligations when you go to the bank to pay the legal fee because the bank will do it for you. So it will be cheaper, as a matter of fact, and less complicated.

Also, we have to respect the officials from the municipalities who get elected—the mandate by the people of Ontario. We cannot force them to do something against their will. If they want to do it, they'll do it on their own.

Again, I believe the debate is important to find a solution for all of us in the province of Ontario. I think that when we talk about seniors, we talk about our future, because all of us are future seniors.

I don't see any reason for me to support this bill. It makes no sense and costs more money for the seniors and the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm really pleased to join this debate on Bill 143. I want to commend my colleague the member from Thornhill for introducing what I believe is a very critical piece of legislation that would provide tax relief for Ontario seniors and people with disabilities, and I congratulate him for doing so.

Fundamentally, this bill is all about ensuring that our low-income seniors and our people with disabilities can continue to live at home independently, and that they can do so with dignity and respect. Certainly, when I spend time with my mother, who is a senior, and with her friends, I can tell you that there is nothing more important to these individuals—many of them with low incomes—than being able to remain at home. It is increasingly becoming much more difficult for these individuals, because we've seen an increase in fees and taxes. Obviously, energy costs are creating severe financial hardship for these individuals. This bill would alleviate some of that stress and some of that pressure.

The other thing this bill would do is alleviate the pressure that we currently are experiencing in this province when it comes to individuals looking for accommodation in retirement homes and long-term-care homes. There simply is no space. This government has not taken the time to formulate a long-term plan so that those who are going to be needing long-term-care homes can be properly accommodated. Currently, we can see what has happened, because in our hospitals we have about 19% of the beds occupied by people who have nowhere else to go. We don't have community or home support. We don't have long-term-care beds.

This bill goes a long way, as I say, to keeping people independent in their own homes. It's coming at a time when they are being hard hit by these skyrocketing hydro rates and the HST is hitting their pocketbooks hard.

So I thank the member for Thornhill. I appreciate the consultation that he has done with his constituents.

And I welcome people here. You can be assured that we strongly support you; I'm disappointed that my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga and the Liberals are not able to. I believe we need to give relief to these people. You can be assured that we want to do what other jurisdictions are doing—British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, which have similar tax deferral programs. Unfortunately, in the province today, we have a series of tax deferral programs, but they're inconsistent and it's a bit of a ragtag system.

This would bring everything together. It would provide the relief that is so necessary today. It would provide fair and equal treatment.

I'm going to be supporting this bill; I would urge others to do so as well. Let's demonstrate to Ontario seniors and persons with disabilities that their government cares about them and that their government is

listening and wants to do everything that it can to allow them to continue to live independently, with dignity and respect, in their own homes.

I conclude by applauding my colleague the member from Thornhill for having identified a need and bringing forward a bill to address this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on Bill 143, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities.

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I want to congratulate my colleague Mr. Shurman and the other co-sponsors of the bill for allowing this to be debated today. I was always under the impression that when a bill was co-sponsored we had the support of all the parties on it. I didn't understand that today. I saw clearly that the government does not support this bill.

I don't know how many people spend a lot of time with their constituents. I spend a lot of time in my constituency and I talk to an awful lot of senior citizens. The one thing that I can tell you today, and I think a lot of people probably will agree with me on this, is that there's a lot of fear out there. Particularly if you are a low-wage earner or you're on a fixed income, there is a real concern out there about what everything is costing you today.

I have people coming up to me—I have levees every year and I have seniors' days etc. Each and every time I have those, people come to me and they say, "Garfield, we're really worried about what is happening out there today with some of the costs that are going up: our water bills, particularly our hydro bills, the new harmonized sales tax." These are all things that they can't counteract. I can tell you that there's a concern out there about people living in their homes and keeping their homes. I just think this is a wonderful idea. There may be some complications as far as the Ministry of Finance and how it's administered, but, you know, if you can administer the hydro bills that we receive today, you can pretty well administer anything, because no one understands what they mean any more, other than that they continue to rise and rise and rise.

I think for that reason alone this is a bill that would be really nice to see go to committee and have input from organizations and groups like those that are here today, from the Ministry of Finance, from all three parties, from people right across the province. Maybe in the end it doesn't make any sense, but it does seem to be a really sensible bill to me and I can see how this bill would allow a lot of Ontario seniors to live the last few years in their homes in a very comfortable and more relaxed atmosphere and not under this anxious worry of always having to wonder where the next dollar is coming from to pay the hydro bill, because there are people who are choosing between paying the hydro bill and eating. That's a fact today, and I see it all the time in some of the little rural Ontario homes. The reality is, this is an opportunity for the government to show real leadership in difficult economic times.

As well, it fits into the strategy they've got called aging at home. We've heard about that. I don't know where they spent any money on it, but I've heard about this strategy in special documents that they've provided, and that they think people should age at home. There's a real strategy out there around that. Imagine if you could allow a person another three or four years of their life not to be in a long-term-care facility or a retirement home, but actually living in their home near their friends and neighbours, near their families, just in the comfort they've enjoyed as citizens of their communities throughout their lives.

I came into this debate today thinking it was kind of a slam-dunk, that all the parties would be supporting it and that we would be moving on to committee. Apparently, that won't happen. I don't know if it's going to be a whipped vote or not. But the reality is, if we're really doing justice to our low-wage income earners and our senior citizens here in the province, I think this is a bill that would be very important for us, as parliamentarians in the province of Ontario, to support.

So I want to thank my colleague Peter Shurman, the member from Thornhill, for bringing this forward. Obviously, he's passionate about this particular case, because it's not the first time he has brought it forward. But as this debate comes to an end, I really hope people on the opposite side will take a second look and support this and give us some real credibility, as parliamentarians, that we really do care about those low-wage income earners and the senior citizens who helped build this province to make it the greatest place in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Thornhill, Mr. Shurman, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You know, not too long ago, the rules in this Legislature changed to allow people to create co-sponsorships of bills, to put parties together so that you could transcend the lines and see what people's points of view were, so that we could put bills like this on the table for discussion. And now I can see why, a couple of days ago, my co-sponsor, the member for York West, said he wouldn't be debating this bill. It's clear that the Liberal Party does not want this bill to pass, at least not coming from this side, or maybe very particularly coming from me; I don't know. But what's unfortunate is that it was never meant to be a partisan bill. It's not about partisanship, and that's why there were three parties co-sponsoring this bill. It is about helping seniors.

When I hear the member, for example, from London–Fanshawe say that he's here to try to come to some consensus, and then run through a litany of all of the wonderful things that the Liberal Party has done to help seniors and add them up to form a total of $1,000, and you put that up against what happens when you've got $5,000 in property tax hitting you every year, where you no longer have that $5,000 as part of your cash flow, you can see where the sentiments of the Liberal Party really are.

The same thing in the lacklustre presentation of the member from Kitchener–Conestoga in basically parroting what she was told to say from the finance department of the Liberal Party. I've got to tell you: Both of those members, and some other ones, but specifically both of those members, should expect to see the member from Thornhill in their ridings during the coming election campaign to tell their constituents just how much they care about seniors' issues.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You don't give a damn because you're screwing them, that's what you're doing, and your constituents are going to hear about it.

I want to thank you very much for your debate, and I know the vote is a foregone conclusion.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. The time for—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on it in about 50 minutes.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, in recognition of the role Ontario's firefighters play every day in keeping our—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Sorry, Mr. Brown.

You guys, it's Thursday afternoon. We have important business, and some of us would like to go home, so behave.

If you'd like to start over, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, in recognition of the role Ontario's firefighters play every day in keeping our communities safe, and in recognition of the evidence of health and safety risks to firefighters over the age of 60, and in keeping with recent Human Rights Tribunal decisions, calls on the government to introduce legislation allowing for the mandatory retirement of firefighters who are involved in fire suppression activities in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Brown moves private member's notice of motion number 67. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: The first thing I would like to do is recognize some friends of all of us here in the Legislature who are in the public gallery: Fred LeBlanc from Kingston, Barry Quinn from Ottawa, Warren Scott from St. Thomas and Mark McKinnon from Toronto, who are all proud members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, with Fred being the president.

I also want to recognize from my own personal and riding perspective the hard work of Randy Richards, who is the vice-president from District 6, and is presently, as I'm told, in Kirkland Lake doing good work with the firefighters of Kirkland Lake.

It's kind of an odd thing for a member who represents, in total, eight professional firefighters. In the constituency I represent, Elliot Lake has the only professional firefighters in their own city. They work hard. They're represented by Darren Conners. They provide us with a great service in the city of Elliot Lake. The rest of our firefighters are volunteers, and we commend all the work that they do.

I want to say, and we all know, that we think of firefighters as the people who run into the buildings when everybody else is running out. They do an admirable job in fire suppression, in keeping people safe. But they're also, almost always, the first people at the scene of any emergency, whether it be a car accident, whether it be a heart attack in a home. Who's there first? Usually it's not our emergency services, the ambulances; it is usually the firefighters.

I want to commend them not only for all their work across the province in making society and communities safe through their fire suppression work, but also for their highly skilled abilities to help people in those critical situations.

So, why are we here? We're here because there is a problem with the retirement age. The motion that I'm putting forward today is just asking the government to move forward on a suggestion that I've heard for the last, I think, three years from the firefighters, where they are asking particularly that we provide a mandatory retirement age of 60. I think that strikes the correct balance between recognizing the rights of firefighters to determine when they wish to retire and the responsibility of fire services across this province to ensure the health and safety of firefighters and the community.

The Human Rights Code currently allows for mandatory retirement where a bona fide occupational requirement is found by a court or tribunal. Mandatory retirement for firefighters who have reached the age of 60 has been established as a bona fide occupational requirement in Ontario since 1986. As a result, mandatory retirement policies have been commonplace in firefighters' collective agreements for many years. Despite this, fire services across the province continue to confront expensive, time-consuming legal challenges to their mandatory retirement policies.

The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario recently considered this issue again in a case called Espey. The tribunal took into account extensive medical evidence, including evidence showing an increase in the incidence of coronary artery disease once firefighters reach the age of 60. The tribunal once again found that mandatory retirement for firefighters who have reached the age of 60 was consistent with Ontario's human rights laws. It is a reasonable approach—one that prioritizes the health and safety of Ontario firefighters in the communities that they serve.

There is still considerable risk, however, that mandatory retirement will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis

before a court or tribunal. The time has come for Ontario to amend its laws to establish some certainty and allow for mandatory retirement of firefighters who have reached the age of 60.

This government has always demonstrated its commitment to fire services in Ontario. Fire safety is a priority of this government, which is why we have:

—made Ontario's homes even safer by amending the Ontario fire code to require working smoke alarms on every level of a home;

—provided municipalities with the Ontario fire grant, which distributed an unprecedented $30 million to fire departments across the province to assist in training, equipment and prevention programs;

—worked with our fire services partners to release the 2007 fire code, replacing the 1997 one, written in an objective-based format that promotes greater flexibility and more uniform enforcement;

—worked with firefighters to establish presumptive legislation—that's really important—ensuring that full-time, part-time and volunteer firefighters, as well as fire investigators, now qualify for benefits under the WSIB when suffering from eight types of cancer, as well as heart injuries within 24 hours of fighting a fire or a training exercise; and

—created the Ontario firefighter memorial, just over here, a place where Ontario's fallen firefighters will be remembered always for their bravery, heroism and sacrifice.

We continue to look forward to working with our firefighters.

I'm urging all members to support this. It's important for all of us to ensure that our firefighters can work in a safe—it's very unsafe, by its nature—occupation and be able to retire with dignity at age 60. I would ask all members to support this resolution. I believe it's in the interests of the people of Ontario, the communities they serve and all the firefighters. Thank you very much. We look forward to your interventions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a pleasure to rise today and support the resolution put forward by the member from Manitoulin. I want to welcome the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association here as well today, led by Fred. We see a lot of Fred around this building, year after year. Always one of the most interesting days of the year is the firefighters' lobby day, and I think all of us get included in the meetings.

Certainly, what you're asking for in the resolution today is something that for at least the last three or four years has been one of the requests that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has asked for on lobby day. It will be interesting to see, to the member from Manitoulin, how far the government will go with this.

Our caucus supports this, and there are a number of reasons why. First of all, there has been strong advocacy here at Queen's Park, but I know that all the associations outside of Queen's Park in our individual areas—I can think of the work I do with Kevin White from the Barrie fire service association, Glenn Higgins from the Orillia fire service association and Michael Gagnon from the Midland fire service association. I work with all these gentlemen all the time. They're great people to work with, and this is something that they feel is important to them.

What I think is important is that as we get a little older, we don't realize that we are deteriorating a certain amount and we don't have quite the physical stamina that we did at one time. This is what they're saying here. As critic for community safety—and I'm sure the minister would agree somewhat with this, and some of the former parliamentary assistants who are here as well—I think this is a public safety issue, and it's not only a public safety issue for the safety of the firefighter who might have a heart attack or something after—because the statistics will show you that that can happen—but it's a safety issue for his or her partners as well, and for the citizens they represent and who they're suppressing these fires with. I think it's important that we listen to this. From what I understand, there are three decades of statistics that back this up, to indicate that as we get to a certain age, these sorts of things happen.

This is one thing we might as well know right now: If we move forward with this, we're probably going to have people who are in excellent shape, these masters guys who are in better shape than anybody, and they will probably say, "Do you know what? I can fight fires until I'm 80 years old"—but we're going by the statistics here. Also, I should point out, on the opposite side, that there are probably firefighters and people who are not in as good shape and may not be as strong or physically fit as someone who is 60 years old.

But the statistics show overall that the magic age of 60 to suppress fires is something that would be a public safety issue, so they've asked for this. It's against some of the other legislation that we have here, but as parliamentarians, we have to look at all the factors, and I think that in the end, our caucus, the Progressive Conservative caucus, does support this.

I wanted to say something else on top of that—and I want to thank Fred LeBlanc and some of the fellows I mentioned, in particular Glenn Higgins from the Orillia fire service, because there's something I wanted to put on the record today. I don't know if you folks all understand this. It involves the death of a firefighter. I'm glad the minister is here, because he might be able to help me with this as well. A young man in my riding died last year of cancer, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, after 30 years as a forest firefighter in the province of Ontario. His name is Tom LeBlanc. His wife, Kim, has asked me to address this and to work with all the different ministries. Fred, I want to thank you for already giving me some indication that it's something that could be brought up in some human resources type of thing.

He was a firefighter with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and he's not covered by the pre-

sumptive legislation. I can remember the day when Jim Wilson asked for unanimous consent for second and third readings of the presumptive legislation, and just last year, we asked for the presumptive legislation to cover our volunteer firefighters in our communities. That's all good news, because we were lobbying for that, and I want to thank Parliament for agreeing to all that.

But now we do have some of these cases like Tom's case, where he fought fires for 30 years—not only here in Ontario, because the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources would send him to California, to BC, to Alberta, all over, basically—wherever there were forests in North America to fight these fires, and he did so for over 30 years. He's not covered. His family was not covered by this presumptive legislation.

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I'm asking, as a member of this Parliament, if we can move forward with at least looking at that right now, because we have about 100 full-time forest firefighters in the province of Ontario and I think that it would only be fair that they be included in this. I'll bring this up later, maybe in a resolution or a question in the House or letters to the different ministries, but I do want to put it on the record that this guy lost his life to cancer and it's a sad thing. She's come forward and asked me to see what I could do to help not only him, but other forest firefighters in the province of Ontario as well.

We can talk a lot about some of the other factors, but I think the proponent of this bill, Mr. Brown, has done a good job in explaining what we want here and what is required under that resolution. I would say, on behalf of the PC caucus, that we'll be supporting the resolution today, and we'll ask the government to take a serious look at this and perhaps bring it into law as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate deeply the opportunity to speak to my friend from Algoma–Manitoulin's resolution. He's a friend, a colleague and a concerned citizen for the firefighters in his riding and across the province. I want to start by thanking him for bringing this forward. Obviously, I want to thank my friends in the gallery, who are here on an ongoing basis, not just for today, for their advocacy as leaders in their organization for bringing good things to their people. Thank you very much for all the good work you do in our communities.

Let me give you a little bit of a background as to why I can stand and wholeheartedly support this resolution. Something little that happens across the province, and of course North America and around the world, is a little competition called the combat challenge. It's denoted as being the toughest two minutes in sport. It was referenced before about the masters division. We're talking about 50-year-olds and older who are capable of doing that combat challenge, probably as good as any one of us here when we were in shape at 23 years old. I wanted to make sure that I was supportive of those who have kept in shape and have done their jobs well under a confined circumstance and not in front of a fire and not in front of a building that's falling apart and going inside of it, which is a different set of circumstances. I think this resolution speaks very largely about what the firefighters themselves are asking for.

One of the other things that I've done is that I was fortunate enough to have a bill passed in this House called the Firefighters' Memorial Day Act, to acknowledge those who have lost their lives doing their job. I was helpful, I believe, in the presumptive legislation, and before I even got elected, I formed a group in my riding called the Friends of the Firefighters. We've raised, to date, over $250,000 for equipment and materials that are needed by our firefighters in our community: thermal imagers before they became part of the normal truck piece, and CO detectors, to complement my colleague from Oxford's desire to have CO detectors in homes across the province. So I'm supportive of those things.

Confession is good for the soul, they say; probably I'm a closet firefighter. I'm not sure whether or not I should be confessing to that, but I have a very strong affinity for firefighters and the work they do.

In particular, I've made it clear that I've also—

Mr. Frank Klees: You have their calendar, too.

Mr. Dave Levac: I have their calendar?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I bet you're not on the calendar.

Mr. Dave Levac: That's a little too far. Speaker, it's unbelievable heckling that's taking place from across the way, to assume that I couldn't make it to their calendar. As a matter of fact, I got asked to pose in their calendar one time.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Forty years ago.

Mr. Dave Levac: Forty years ago. Not in the Toronto Sun.

Having said that, I stand before you in full support of the member. I also suggest very strongly that there is a legitimate reason why they're asking what they're asking. Somebody started to go through the process of why it's a safety issue, and I do agree with my friend from Simcoe North. My friend from Simcoe North brings up a very good point that's extremely important: to make sure that we recognize the safety side. We want to have the best of the best coming into our homes to protect us. We want the best of the best to protect our industry. We want the best of the best to be healthy at the end of their careers. That's another part.

And the last comment that I want to bring to you which, for me, continually resonates, and I know the members know this, is the families: to make sure we say thank you to their families for the gift of these firefighters, and the fact that at the twilight of their careers, I want their families to get them back whole. To ask us to do this is not about a selfish concept of being able to say, "Get out; you're done." It's about making sure that when they do leave, they leave with as much as they can, physically and emotionally, and give it back to the families who have given them to us.

As a community and as a province, I think it behooves us to listen carefully to what is being asked in this resolution. Just to make sure that people understand we're not asking the impossible, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario has already said this, and I quote: "The tribunal once again found that mandatory retirement for firefighters who have reached the age of 65 was consistent with Ontario's human rights law."

What I am suggesting to you very clearly is that this ask, through a motion, is also to put into motion—it's not asking for it immediately today. It's to put into motion the discussions that we have to have to get to the point where we can offer what the firefighters are asking for. We've already got some rulings in different sectors that make it clear that it's very doable. There may be some challenges, so we have to make sure that's understood clearly. There may be some challenges. But overall, what we found out is that there's a place for this to happen.

I'm in full support of the member from Algoma–Manitoulin's resolution. I will be voting in favour of the resolution. I thank the member for bringing it forward. I thank the member from Simcoe North for his comments about not only his own constituent but, more importantly, understanding that this is an important aspect of who we are as a Legislature and our belief in and support for firefighters across the board.

I look forward to the comments and the evaluation of the NDP, because I'm curious as to whether or not they believe there is room for this to happen. I'll listen carefully to them, because I do understand, in my conversation with the member from Welland, that he has nothing but admiration and respect and will support this. But I leave it at that and will find out what is going to happen.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Levac: This isn't politics. This is about making sure that in this time we hear exactly what the concerns might be, if there are any.

I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to rise in support of this private member's bill, ballot number 69, by the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. I certainly support this as well. I've met with the professional firefighters here at Queen's Park; they've recently been in my office to speak about these issues and others. I've also had the opportunity to speak with my local fire department, Chief Patrick Cayen from the city of Sarnia, and the rank-and-file membership there as well, who also support this. I talked to them as recently as today to make sure that they knew this bill was being debated here today and that it had been introduced. I said I intended to rise and speak in favour of it.

I did some research on that, and most of it's from the professional firefighters. They were kind enough to leave some information with me when they met before. So, just to put on the record the genuine concern for health and safety of Ontario citizens as well as firefighters, there is statistical, medical and other evidence over three decades that has shown that as firefighters age, they demonstrate a decline in physical fitness, an increased rate of coronary disease, and a loss of both cognitive functions and other capabilities which would lead to possible stresses and injuries in the workplace.

The code currently permits mandatory retirement where there is a bona fide occupational requirement. This must, however, be proven on a case-by-case basis. The effect of challenging these claims, however, introduces—I don't know whether anyone has spoken about this yet today; I had to step out for a minute—a fiscal burden on both the municipalities and the local associations having to go through great legal steps and paying lawyers to fight these exemptions. So having the exemption for firefighters identified in legislation would recognize this bona fide occupational requirement.

Most recently, a decision in a case in London handed down by the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario found that collective agreement provisions requiring London firefighters to retire at age 60 did not violate the code, and therefore upheld that mandatory requirement.

1510

In my conversations with the firefighters from my local municipalities in Sarnia–Lambton, when I spoke with them, they spoke also in favour of this. They asked that I speak in favour of it today, and I'm certainly pleased to rise. Of course, our critic from Simcoe North also spoke quite eloquently about the other issues that are to do with the forest firefighters, who also face significant risk. As that member said, they travel across Canada, not just Ontario, fighting fires.

On that, I'd like to retire. I'd say that, because of the positions of the numerous human rights tribunals and decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada, the money and time invested by all parties in these matters would certainly be resources that could be put to a better use; to move on from that. Let's ask the government to draft the legislation, bring it before committee and try to make the types of improvements that would make this bill, certainly, more acceptable and make sure that we could do the mandatory retirement for firefighters engaged in suppression and those types of activities.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to rise today and to speak in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand on behalf of my caucus, I think—certainly on behalf of Mr. Kormos—to support this motion. We believe that the time has come to ensure that there is mandatory retirement at age 60 for those officers involved in fire suppression activities.

We support the motion in spite of the fact—and I guess because it's a motion. It's not a bill. All that happens in a motion, just so that people who might be watching this on television—it's not binding on the government, but it is a form of moral suasion, so that the government, or perhaps the next government, might take a very solid look at this and put the entire machinery of

bureaucracy and government around crafting a bill which will have the desired effect.

I do know that, given the relatively short time left in this particular Parliament, it is not all that likely that a bill can be brought forward from the passage of this motion today, should it be passed—and I'm reasonably sure it will. There's not a strong likelihood, in any event, that a bill could come, be debated, go through first, second and third reading and committee, all of those things, in the limited time that is left of this Parliament. I guess what we are saying today is that a future government, perhaps after October of this year, might want to come and take a look at the motion that was passed and start the necessary machinery towards making this a law.

I stand here, as well, mindful of my friend, a firefighter and former fire chief of the borough of East York, who died this year. He died at Christmastime. Many of us who knew him were quite shocked that such a relatively young man, who had just retired not that long ago, died. And of course, like so many, tragically like so many firefighters, he died of cancer. I think it can be reasonably assumed that that cancer was contracted during the time that he was a fire suppression officer.

His name was John Miller. There is a fire hall located at the corner of Cosburn and Donlands which is the John C. Miller fire hall. We named that after him upon the time of his retirement, which coincided with the time of amalgamation. There were six fire chiefs in what was then Toronto, and only one fire chief remained following the amalgamation. John was not chosen to be the first fire chief of Toronto, although I'm sure he would have made a good one. He retired and he went to live in Tillsonburg.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: That's a good place.

Mr. Michael Prue: A good place, yes. But before he did that, he was my neighbour. He lived in East York, in the lovely little area known as Parkview Hills, which is where I live. As I said, we were surprised when we learned over the Christmas holidays that he had succumbed to cancer.

I think why I'm saying all of that is because we need to put forward a bill to protect the John Millers. We need to put forward a bill to protect all of the firefighters who put their lives immediately at risk every time there is a fire call, but who put their lives at risk in a long-term fashion simply by the nature of the job that they do, simply by being there in the fires, amongst those agents that cause cancer: the burning of chemicals, the burning of wood, the inhaling of smoke. All of those things can be injurious to health, not only immediately but in the long term as well.

The member from Brantford talked about the NDP and what our position was. We do have some concerns—not with this motion, because this motion merely asks the government to come forward with a bill, and we support that. But when and if the government comes forward with a bill, there are some details that are going to have to be looked at. I raise them today not in any kind of negative way, in terms of what the member is saying, but in terms of what is going to have to be negotiated with the various fire departments and with the associations of firefighters both in Ontario and in their respective cities.

The first one that comes immediately to mind is that some fire departments in Ontario have mandatory retirement at age 60. Certainly, the motion is attempting to have all of them do that. Some have it at 65. They have other ages. I asked this morning if the city of Toronto has mandatory retirement for fire suppression officers at 65, and my informant told me that that was negotiated into the contract by the firefighters themselves.

So I think we need to take a good, hard look, and discuss with those unions and with those members whether or not they wish to keep the age at 65, and if so, why, because a lot of futures are predicated on that as well. I say that because if a person joins a fire department when they're in their 20s, there's probably no harm at all in the age 60. If they do so a little later in life, say after 30 or 35 years of age, and they don't have the kind of seniority they need by the age of 60, do they get a full pension? It's really important to people who spend a lot of time in one particular job that they get a full pension.

We in the New Democratic Party believe very strongly in pensions and in the rights of people to look at that age when they can retire to ensure that it is as full and as complete a pension as possible. There is no sense sending people away—if they don't have enough money, after they have risked their lives, after they have dedicated themselves to public service—and saying, "Well, you started too late, so you don't get a full pension, and now you have to go at age 60."

We want to make sure that those people are protected and that there is some kind of negotiation or some kind of phase-in within the bill that will protect all of those people who have come to expect a certain lifestyle at the end of their service, and who also, I think, pretty much are banking on the monies that they're going to get at the time of their retirement. It's very difficult to take that away, and then some bitterness might be caused. We don't want there to be any bitterness whatsoever for any members as a result of what is happening here.

So I merely raise this issue, hoping that a government, either now or in the future, will take a look and, when crafting the bill, will work with the firefighters' unions to ensure that everyone is protected and that no one is forced to retire earlier than he or she would have wanted to, especially as it relates to their pension and the pensionable monies that would accrue to them.

1520

I think, too, that a good point was made by the member from Simcoe North about looking at firefighters who are not traditional firefighters in the way we see them in the towns and cities of this province, but who are firefighters in remote areas—those who go into forest fires, those who work in other locations—to ensure that they have some of the same opportunities. They certainly have many of the same risks. They certainly are subject to smoke and, I assume, a lot of carcinogens, which they're forced to breathe in or to live with. They too need some kind of protection.

If a bill is being crafted, I commend him for bringing this up, because I had never really thought of those people. When you think of firefighters, you don't think of those who fight forest fires in quite the same way, but in fact the point was a very good one. This government, or a future government—not to water down in any way what we're doing for firefighters—might want to take a good, hard look at this.

So I think—Peter, do you want some time?

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. So I think I'm going to conclude and leave a few minutes for my colleague from Welland, who I think also wants to address the issue.

I would implore all members to vote for this. It sends a direction to a government. It tells them what this Legislature thinks and what we believe to be right and correct. It asks them to start doing the heavy slogging and the lifting now, so that we can get this law passed as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Just before I ask for further debate—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you very much—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Just one moment, member from Guelph. I just want to make an announcement that the third ballot item today won't be heard. We'll be voting in about 10 or 12 minutes on both ballot items, so if you're in your offices and that, you may want to come down for the vote. It will be early today.

Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak in support of the motion that's been brought by my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin on this whole issue of mandatory retirement for firefighters. Welcome to the representatives of the OPFFA who are in the gallery this afternoon.

I come from a university town. As many of you will be aware, university faculty, or at least some university faculty, were strongly opposed to mandatory retirement provisions. They actually took this all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and were successful in getting the Supreme Court of Canada to strike down some of the traditional mandatory retirement provisions that businesses and institutions had. As a result of that, in part, we changed the legislation here in the province of Ontario to relax the rules around mandatory retirement and to allow people to work past the normal retirement age if they choose.

Having said that, however, it's very important, especially when we look at a group like firefighters, that we reach the right balance between the right of people to choose when they retire, as outlined by the Supreme Court, and also the responsibility of the fire service to ensure both the health and safety of its own members and of the community at large.

I've also had the opportunity, while I've been an MPP, at the invitation of Colin Hunter, the president of the Guelph firefighters' association, and Shawn Armstrong, who is the fire chief in Guelph, to attend an event that they do periodically, which is to get the politicians in town to come in, suit up, go into the smoke house and get some sense of it. If you can imagine me, decked out in the full regalia of a firefighter, going into a smoke-filled building and trying to rescue, as it turns out, a rolled-up rug and lug it out—I've done that. What that really does is give you some appreciation for the physical conditioning—that I obviously don't have in order to do that with a real person—that a real firefighter needs to have to do the job and meet the expectations of the job when required to go into a burning building and rescue people. It's for that reason that human rights legislation does allow, where there are bona fide work requirements, to have mandatory retirement.

This motion which Mr. Brown has brought is very well crafted, in my opinion. He talks about recognizing the evidence of health and safety risks to firefighters over the age of 60. As the member from Simcoe North mentioned, there are decades of research supporting the idea that there are physical requirements that people who are older are not going to be able to reach. There's also very dramatic accumulated health and safety risks to their own personal health for firefighters.

The motion also says "in keeping with recent Human Rights Tribunal decisions," because as many have mentioned, since the change in the legislation there have been a number of cases before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal where the tribunal has said that yes, there is a bona fide job requirement in the case of firefighters that they be allowed to have mandatory retirement at age 60. Then my colleague goes on to say that we need to bring in legislation to allow for the mandatory retirement of firefighters who are involved in fire suppression activities because that's where the bona fide job requirement is.

I think my colleague across the way from Beaches–East York brings up an interesting point about pensions. In fact, the response to why this is a motion and not an act is that when you do an act there's often a need to have transitional language in it, and one of the transitional things we would have to make sure of is that if you're going to have mandatory retirement at age 60, the pension arrangements max out at age 60 so that you can go on full pension. Those are the sorts of things that actual legislation would have as transitional requirements.

So thank you to my colleague. Absolutely I will be supporting this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank member from Algoma–Manitoulin for presenting this motion. I think it's a very important motion when we look at the nature of firefighting. Having done that for 25 years, I realized the importance of the people you're working with being capable of looking after you when you go in there with them.

Obviously, from all the things we've heard today, there's no way of accurately measuring on an ongoing basis whether one would meet that requirement or not. So

I think it's important that the things that have been negotiated in contracts up until now are allowed to stay in place, which is saying that you reach a certain point in your life and then you can no longer be in the fire suppression business, for the protection of everyone.

I'm a little concerned about the question about the pensions, because it would seem to me that if we already have a lot of the contracts that contain the retirement age at 60, the pension would be set up to do that and the fact you mandate it for everyone wouldn't change the ability of getting a full pension at 60. So I think that's maybe something that doesn't require quite as much debate and concern as one might think.

It's very important to recognize that the process that was set in place to get rid of mandatory retirement was predicated on the fact that the ability of people wasn't necessarily directly related to the age you were. It's reasonable to assume that those members in the Legislature who have passed retirement age are still as capable today as they ever were. But I'm sure that if they put me back on a fire truck and made me fight a fire, I would not be able to do it. So I see no reason why we shouldn't have legislation to prohibit that from happening and protect the other people who are still there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: While my colleague the member for Beaches–East York has made it very clear that New Democrats support this resolution, I suppose the question that should be asked is, what the heck's been going on since the government, with all its fanfare, eliminated retirement ages? Firefighters have made it clear from the get-go that they wanted to be included as an exception to the broader rule. The resolution reflects that desire, that wish, of firefighters. Through their professional association, they've been here lobbying for a couple of years now, at least.

I'm cynical enough, I suppose, to wonder why the government won't throw this into legislation that it's going to try and pass before it rises for the summer so as to lure firefighters back into their camp in time for a fall election. I suppose at the same time, though, firefighters are winners. Firefighters are not going to be inclined to want to support losing campaigns, so maybe even that kind of legislation isn't going to be particularly effective at luring firefighters into their camp. But the government should have delivered the goods on this rather than relying upon a backbencher to put forward merely a resolution that will be supported.

Gosh, Henry Labenski down in Welland, who I think is a year older than me—so that would make him around 59—retired two years ago, for Pete's sake. He's a long-time firefighter, a president of the local association. He and I went to elementary school together, a long-time friend of mine. Mike Fowler, who's the president now of the professional firefighters' association down in Welland, is another good friend of mine, an excellent, outstanding firefighter, a great leader amongst his colleagues. It's for Henry and Mike, amongst so many other women and men in the firefighting services, that we support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Algoma–Manitoulin, Mr. Brown, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I want to thank the members for Simcoe North, Brant, Sarnia–Lambton, Beaches–East York, Guelph, Oxford and Welland for their indication of support for this resolution.

I think it's very important that we recognize that our firefighters across the province are asking for this to happen and that it is a reasonable thing to happen, and it is an efficient thing to happen. It avoids municipalities and locals of the firefighters from engaging in long legal disputes about things they don't need to have long legal disputes about. The tribunals clearly indicate that this is not a problem. It can happen, and it should happen.

I am particularly happy that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services was here to listen to most of the debate. I think it indicates that the government itself is very concerned with this issue and wants it to move forward. I think today's decision by this Legislature will help that along the way.

I have been here for a long time and I know that the support of the Legislature from all sides helps legislation move forward. I appreciate the comments that people have made. They've made some interventions that I don't think I thought of, and I think that's a good thing. I think that the firefighters of Ontario should know we in this Legislature want this to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE REPORT DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll first deal with ballot item number 67, standing in the name Mr. Shurman.

Mr. Shurman has moved second reading of Bill 143, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after we vote on the next ballot item.

FIREFIGHTERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 69.

Mr. Brown has moved private members notice of motion number 67.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those oppose will please say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1534 to 1539.

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE REPORT DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Shurman has moved second reading of Bill 143. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Miller, Paul
Clark, Steve	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Shurman, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Best, Margarett	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, Dave	Sousa, Charles
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Moridi, Reza	
Dhillon, Vic	Pendergast, Leeanna	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 12; the nays are 25.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll open the doors for 30 seconds.

FIREFIGHTERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Brown has moved private member's notice of motion number 67. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Miller, Paul
Arthurs, Wayne	Dunlop, Garfield	Moridi, Reza
Bailey, Robert	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pendergast, Leeanna
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Best, Margarett	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Clark, Steve	Levac, Dave	Shurman, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Carried on division.

Just before we adjourn, we thank our pages and wish them well in life.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 21, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1544.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
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Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
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Norm Miller, Leeanna Pendergast
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Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, Aileen Carroll, P.C.
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group / Comité spécial sur la transaction proposée entre le Groupe TMX et le London Stock Exchange Group

Chair / Président: Gerry Phillips
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Frank Klees
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Gilles Bisson, Michael A. Brown
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Lundi 21 mars 2011

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 mars 2011

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

RAYMOND WALTER AND KENNETH REA

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to ask all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence for two firefighters killed in the line of duty on March 17: firefighter Raymond Walter and Deputy District Chief Kenneth Rea.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the Legislature, our condolences go to the family. The flags here at Queen's Park are flying at half mast.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm pleased to be joined today in the east gallery by my big sister, Susan Houghton, and her husband and my brother-in-law, Roy Houghton. Welcome, Susan and Roy.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd ask everyone to give a warm welcome to Ms. Brenda Jenkins, who's a health care professional at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, and her niece Imogen Jenkins, who's in her last year as a student at the University of Toronto Schools.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce the following individuals from the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards: Alok Mukherjee, Kevin Eccles, Brenda Harper, Fred Kaustinen, Henry Jensen, Uly Bondy, Kathy Wallace, Bob Maich, Vaughn Stewart and Sarbjit Kaur.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. You're making Ontario families foot the bill for the expensive mess you've made of hydro. Six years ago you created the Ontario Power Authority, saying it was a transitional agency and promising it would produce your long-term energy plan, but all you have to show for it are skyrocketing hydro bills, a record of backtracking from the offshore wind experiment and the screwed-up micro-FIT experiment the OPA produced for you. Will you give some relief to Ontario families here and now and scrap the OPA before it does any more damage?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, it's good to be back. I welcome the question from my honourable colleague.

I can say that, in contrast to the party opposite, we in fact have a considered, thoughtful, responsible plan. We were dangerously close to running short of electricity back in 2003. We have since put in place a long-term plan. In fact, we are rebuilding 80% of our energy system over the course of the next 20 years. We're cleaning up our air. We're creating thousands of new jobs.

When it comes to matters of providing rate relief for Ontario families, we put forward an initiative adopted by this House but opposed by my colleagues opposite. We're reducing energy bills by 10% on each bill over the course of the next five years. If they are, in fact, in favour of supporting families and helping relieve them of some of the burdens associated with rebuilding this electricity system, you would think they might want to support our clean energy benefit, which is cutting the cost of bills by 10%.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I guess the answer is no. But in point of fact, the only transition the OPA has been doing is to go from being a small agency of 15 to a bloated bureaucracy of over 300 employees. The operating budget for your planning agency has bloated from $14 million to $79 million a year but has yet to produce a plan that you're going to stick with. The sunshine list has been bloated from six to 75 bureaucrats. Executive salaries have gone from $1 million to $12 million a year. The CEO alone is making over half a million dollars.

Premier, will you give relief to Ontario families and scrap the OPA here and now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I could understand why the members opposite might be opposing the work that the OPA is doing, because much of the work they're doing is implementing our conservation programs that they oppose. Much of the work that they're doing is engaging in energy planning, something they never did when they were in office and that they have opposed every step of the way. Much of the work they're doing is replacing coal generation, once again something that member after member over there has come out in opposition to.

But we're determined to build a clean, reliable, modern energy system. We're determined to get this system out of coal. We're determined to clean our air and build a healthier future for our kids and grandkids. And, yes, the Ontario Power Authority has a very important role to play in helping us reach that goal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The Ontario Power Authority is the poster child of the expensive mess the McGuinty Liberals have made of hydro in this province. Ontario families pay the $1 million the OPA wasted on a propaganda brochure and $3 million more on selling your expensive energy experiments. Ontario families pay every cent of the quarter-billion dollars your so-called transitional energy planning agency has spent on administration over the past five years. Ontario families pay for the OPA spending almost as much on consultants as salaries. Ontario families pay on the hydro bills for jobs to the McGuinty Liberal family, like Ben Chin, Adèle Hurley and Patrick Monahan.

How much more will Ontario families have to pay before you scrap the OPA?

Hon. Brad Duguid: One of the things we take a great deal of pride in is the fact that we have laid out to Ontarians a long-term energy plan in a very straightforward manner, engaging Ontarians in the investments we need to make to build a clean, reliable, modern energy system. We have laid it all out for them in our long-term energy plan.

It has been over 630 days that their leader has been their leader, and he has refused to talk about their plan every single one of those days. But here is what their campaign director had to say about it: "The only people who are demanding our policy at the moment in a booklet form, where it's simple and easy and they don't have to do any work, (are journalists), because they want to take the opportunity to shoot at it."

"Journalists need details of party policy documented because they are otherwise too lazy to discover them."

That is the epitome of arrogance. Ontario families deserve to know where you stand. Journalists—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, they don't want to answer that question. I'll try another one.

Back to the Premier: When the Ontario Power Authority is not wasting money, it has been busy finding new ways to make life miserable for Ontario families. The OPA spent a billion dollars ordering utilities to install smart meters despite the same utilities warning them that your tax machines didn't work.

The OPA came up with the microFIT program that left Ontario families out tens of thousands of dollars. The OPA was so convinced you needed a new power plant in Oakville that they signed a contract to build it, and now Ontario families face a billion-dollar bill after your seat-saver backtrack. With each and every mishap, Ontario families have had to pay.

How much more will Ontario families pay before you scrap the OPA?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We have a long-term energy plan that lays out the investments that we need to make over the next 20 years.

I want to quote something that that very member said not too long ago. This is what he said: "Ontario needs an energy plan and the leadership to see it through." Not having a plan is "just wasting precious time." In the words of the leader's own critic, you ought to stop wasting the precious time of Ontario families and let them know what your plan is.

For well over 600 days your leader has been the leader of your party, and he has yet to share his plan with your caucus, with his party, with this Legislature and with Ontario families. It's obvious he's afraid to share his plan. Is it because you don't support our clean energy benefit, taking 10% off the bills of Ontario families? Is it because your plan would drive billions of dollars of investment in our clean energy economy out of Ontario to other—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thought we asked the questions.

Your OPA bureaucrats in downtown Toronto are setting up windmills across Ontario with absolutely no local say. Your planning agency has Ontario families paying a billion dollars to Quebec and the United States to take unplanned surplus hydro off our hands. They've negotiated FIT contracts that make Ontario families pay 80 cents for five-cent power. You've had to backtrack twice on your ground-source solar rates that you set. You've had to backtrack on the plans you had for your offshore windmills. With each and every backtrack, Ontario families have to pay.

I ask you again: How much more will Ontario families pay before you scrap the OPA?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think what Ontario families need to know is why that party doesn't support our clean energy benefit that's taking 10% off the bills of Ontario families, small businesses and farmers. Why don't you support that? If you really care about Ontario families, support our clean energy benefit.

I think Ontario families also deserve to know why you want to kill thousands of clean energy jobs that we're creating right across this province. We're creating jobs, good clean energy jobs, in communities like Cambridge, Burlington, Fort Erie, Sault Ste. Marie, Tillsonburg, Newmarket, Don Mills, Windsor, Woodbridge, Peterborough, Guelph, Kingston, Welland, and the list goes on and on. These communities are benefiting. You want to kill those jobs that we're creating right across this province.

Tell Ontario families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'll tell you one thing we don't support: the hydro rates that you've festered onto the people in this province since you've taken office.

Over the last six years, the OPA hasn't missed a chance to hike its salaries, waste money or find new ways to drive up already skyrocketing hydro bills on Ontario families. They've helped you turn the hydro bill from one of the bills to "the bill." Hydro rates are up 75% under your watch; 100% if you've got a smart meter. According to the plans that your so-called transitional agency came up with, hydro bills will climb by another 46%.

You have to be out of touch not to notice that Ontario families are at the breaking point and need someone who looks after them instead of looking out for another bloated bureaucracy.

For the last time today: Will you do what the Ontario PCs would do—take a page out of their book—and scrap the OPA?

Hon. Brad Duguid: If the PC Party actually respected Ontario families, they wouldn't have voted against reducing their electricity bills by 10% through our clean energy benefit, and they wouldn't have voted against our efforts to reduce the taxes of 93% of Ontario families.

If the PC Party actually respected Ontario families, they wouldn't have plans to kill thousands of clean energy jobs that Ontario families are going to rely on and are relying on.

If the PC Party actually respected Ontario families, they would not have opposed our efforts every step of the way to move out of dirty coal, to clean our air and to build a healthier future for our kids and grandkids.

Instead, they continue to oppose our plans, but they're afraid to tell Ontario families where they stand on these issues. I don't blame them, because if Ontario families knew that they don't support our clean energy benefit, that they want to kill thousands of jobs, that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Tomorrow, the federal government will present its budget to the House of Commons. Next week, the province will present its budget. In Ottawa, the Prime Minister has made it very, very clear that he'll make corporate tax giveaways a priority and that families will likely be left out in the cold when it comes to HST relief on home heating bills.

My question is a simple one: Will this Premier's priorities be any different?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question from my honourable colleague. I want to reference for her benefit something said by former Prime Minister Tony Blair in a speech to his party. He said this: "In the past, social democrats became identified with high taxes, especially on business. Modern social democrats recognize that in the right circumstances, tax reform and tax cuts can play a critical part in meeting their wider social objectives.

"For instance, corporate tax cuts raise profitability and strengthen the incentives to invest."

I would argue that those are words from a very successful Labour Party leader who encountered tremendous opposition at the outset but tremendous acclaim with the passage of time.

Here in Ontario, we're bringing a balanced, thoughtful approach, and in fact, we're cutting taxes for people and for businesses at the same time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Budgets are about priorities. New Democrats want to focus on household budgets, but this government seems determined to give money to corporations that are laying people off. In Ottawa, the Liberal Party has said that they won't support federal budgets that include further corporate tax giveaways. Does the Premier side with the Prime Minister or the leader of his own party?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would encourage my honourable colleague to pick up the phone and get hold of Jack Layton and work out their differences on this matter. Again, I can't speak for what is happening in Ottawa, but I can gladly speak about what is happening here at Queen's Park. The fact of the matter is, we're bringing a balanced, thoughtful, progressive approach. We are in fact reducing the burden on our families. We have our clean energy benefit, which is reducing their hydro bills by 10%. We are reducing the tax burden on families through an income tax cut; it's an average of $355 for families this year and every year going forward. The NDP, by the way, voted against that relief. There is our Ontario child benefit, the first benefit of its kind in the country. It's now grown to $1,100 per child. It's benefiting some 1.3 million Ontario children. Again, the NDP voted against that. In fact, every single time we put forward a positive, progressive initiative to help Ontario families, they stand opposed to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The recession hurt corporate budgets, but the real damage was to household budgets. Unemployment remains stubbornly high. Families face record debt loads and wages are stagnant. The Premier's answer is a new tax on home heating bills for families and a tax break for banks and insurance companies that are shedding jobs and reaping profits.

Will the Premier offer families some relief, or will he continue to hand tax giveaways to corporations that simply aren't creating any jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague that at one point in time she championed an 8% cut off our energy bills for Ontario families. We rejected that. We said that was inadequate. We put in place a 10% cut for Ontario families. The amazing thing is that the leader of the NDP has yet to acknowledge that and has yet to stand up in support of that. We

think that's important; it's substantive; it's pragmatic. It's something that stands to the immediate benefit of families that's in place right now and it will continue for the course of the next five years.

As I said earlier, every single time we find a way to provide practical support to families, to reduce their financial burden, to provide them with further financial support, the NDP for some reason continues to stand against that very support.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Public hearings on a plan to build new reactors at the Darlington facilities begin today. The tragic events unfolding in Japan have caused governments around the world to pause and reassess their nuclear plans. Why isn't this Premier willing to do the exact same?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I know that I speak for all members of the Legislature when I say that our thoughts are with the people of Japan in this terrible time. I think our responsibility is twofold here. One is to reach out, with the federal government, to offer whatever support we can to the people of Japan. Secondly, we owe it to Ontarians to draw whatever lessons we might from the consequences of the earthquake and tsunami to the nuclear stations located in Japan. We will make every possible effort to draw those lessons. We've been in contact with the federal regulator. I myself have spoken this morning directly with the head of OPG to make sure we take whatever time is required to draw whatever lessons that might be available to us from the experience they are having today in Japan.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Germany is halting plans to extend the lives of 17 nuclear plants, Israel is now rethinking a new nuclear plant, China is taking a step back to review its plans, and one prominent US senator has called on his country to put the brakes on new nuclear plants. Will the Premier put a hold on the hearings until nuclear regulators worldwide have assessed the lessons that may be learned from the tragedy in Japan? He just said he wants to draw the lessons. How do you draw the lessons if you don't wait until the learning has been done?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As my colleague knows, there's a federal environmental assessment already under way. By the way, that assessment is already five years old; it's not the kind of thing that is rushed.

I also want to remind my honourable colleague of a letter sent by my colleague the Minister of Energy just last week to his federal counterparts. In part, the letter reads as follows: "We encourage your government to make any necessary changes to the ... environmental assessment" process "to ensure that the events in Japan are taken into consideration." The letter goes on to say, "We are seeking your written assurance that the environmental assessment process will be adapted in any necessary way to ensure that the events of last week in Japan can be taken into account." It concludes by saying, "You and the panel will have our full support and co-operation, as well as that of Ontario Power Generation."

I want to assure Ontarians we will take all the time necessary to draw whatever lessons we can from the experience in Japan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Around the world, people are actually taking a step back right now from nuclear power, but this government is acting like nothing at all has happened, like nothing has changed. As a result, Ontario families could be stuck with higher bills as industry standards begin to change—or worse, new reactors that ignore new regulations and new standards. Why won't the Premier follow the lead that is being set by the global community? Why won't he follow that lead and take some time to consider whether Ontario in fact really, really needs new nuclear energy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's no secret that my honourable colleague appears to be opposed to nuclear-generated electricity of any kind at any time. We bring a different approach. Fifty per cent of our electricity today is generated from nuclear stations; there are some 70,000 people working in the sector.

I think what we owe to ourselves, but more importantly what we owe to Ontarians, is to make sure we take a long, hard look at the experience in Japan to see whatever lessons that might offer, and to ensure that we take advantage of that new information and introduce it into our thinking here in Ontario.

There is an environmental assessment that is under way. It is already five years old. It is not the kind of thing that anybody is proposing that we rush. If it takes a little bit longer so that we can acquire more information from the Japanese experience, then we will by all means do that. What we owe to Ontarians is to take advantage of this terrible experience and see if there's new information and introduce that into our thinking here.

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. Premier McGuinty said that crime is not a priority with Ontario families. Then you said Liz Hoage doesn't deserve support because she didn't witness the tragic murder of her child. And then again on Friday we saw just how out of touch you have become when the Ontario PC caucus revealed that the McGuinty Liberals are sitting on a $31-million surplus in the victims' justice fund. Our leader, Tim Hudak, said the Ontario PC government will release the victims' fund surplus, change the definition of "victim" and add victim representation to the CICB. Premier, will you take a page from the Ontario PCs and make those three changes yourself?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. In fact, there's an important issue here. I don't

agree with my colleague's representation of our position on this, but notwithstanding that, there is an important issue here. The fact of the matter is that Jonathan, who was 15 years of age, and Joey, who was 16 years of age, lost their lives, and their parents were rejected by the board when it comes to providing some kind of compensation.

We think that there's something fundamentally wrong with that. We think that we need to work together to resolve that. We have made some changes to the system in the past. We have doubled the number of adjudicators who are working there. We have more staff to support the hearings and families. It's up from 50 to 66 today, but we think that we can and ought to bring about changes to ensure that this kind of thing does not happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Ontario families aren't looking for crocodile tears from that side of the House. Ontario families are looking for a government that puts the same priority on crime and victims of crime that Ontario families do. Both the Ombudsman and former Chief Justice McMurtry say you didn't do enough for victims. You promised you would take McMurtry's report seriously, but you haven't. If you can't get your priorities straight, then Ontario families can rest assured that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC government will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member about the use of names. I let it go once. I should've jumped on it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: When will you admit crime is a priority for Ontario families, follow the lead of our leader and get victims of crime the support they need?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we're speaking here about a decision made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. For the record, we have doubled the amount spent on vital services for victims of crime since 2003. We have streamlined the process so that victims can get the assistance they need more quickly. As I said a moment ago, we've invested in more adjudicators and staff to clear the backlog that we inherited. We also created a new victim quick response program to cover emergency expenses.

As the Attorney General has said, we have asked the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and officials to come up with options on how to address the very issues raised by the leader of the official opposition. I think that there is a real case to be made here for these families who lost their children, and we think that we can do something. We look forward to any co-operation that my friends opposite might want to offer us in this regard.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health. A few hours ago, the minister announced funding for drugs like Herceptin, a tribute to the persistence of Jill Anzarut.

Why is it that just over a week ago the minister claimed it would be illegal to take action?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question. Let me begin by saying how important it is that women do get screened for breast cancer. We have one of the highest survival rates in the world for women with breast cancer, in part because of our excellent breast screening process. This issue, and others—it's been brought to my attention that while we absolutely must rely on evidence when we make decisions about what drugs to fund, there is a grey area. Evidence is not always black and white. There are grey areas. So what I've announced this morning is a program that will allow us to work with the drug companies to build the body of research that is necessary in order to make the right decisions for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister said that the decision to fund cancer drugs "is not one that rests with the Minister of Health." She then suggested it would be "illegal" and would constitute an abuse of her position to fight for drug funding.

Why did the minister take so long to do the right thing, to figure out that there's more than just black and white, that grey actually does exist?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I stand by my statement that choosing which drugs to fund and for whom is not the role of the minister. Our job is, however, to continue to set policy direction, to move forward, to improve care for people with cancer and with other diseases. The issue of that grey area is one that has been under discussion for some time. So Cancer Care Ontario and the Committee to Evaluate Drugs will be moving forward to develop criteria so we can start to work to develop the evidence where, because the number of people involved is so small, traditional clinical trials cannot be performed on those people with rare diseases. So we are moving forward to create a program that will begin to address that grey area.

1100

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Energy. Nuclear power generates over half of Ontario's electricity, and Canada's nuclear industry employs tens of thousands of Ontarians, many of them in the Oakville and Mississauga area.

Tragic events in Japan recently have led to a lot of discussion and a lot of debate over the past week about the future of nuclear energy and the safety of our power plants here in Ontario.

The government's long-term energy plan outlines the need to maintain our nuclear capacity to continue to supply that power reliably.

My question to the minister is: Can he confirm this morning that Ontario's reactors are operating safely and will continue to operate safely as we move forward with the implementation of our plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Oakville for raising this important question. Indeed, we all are watching the events unfolding in Japan, and our thoughts continue to be with the Japanese people during this very, very difficult time.

Understandably, Ontarians want to know about the safety our nuclear plants right here in Ontario. The fact is, Ontario's nuclear plants have operated safely since the first facility went online about 40 years ago. Ontario's plants are safe. They continually operate at or above international safety standards and are equipped with multiple built-in safety mechanisms and multiple layers of backup systems.

Nevertheless, I have asked the CEOs of Bruce Power and Ontario Power Generation to lead a joint effort to identify lessons learned from the incident in Japan and recognize how they can make a safe system here in Ontario even safer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Durham region is host to two of Ontario's nuclear generating facilities: Pickering and Darlington. The communities of Durham region have hosted these important plants for several decades now, with many families making their livelihood as a result of their presence and continued safe operation. There's no doubt that Ontario Power Generation has very much become a part of the community. In fact, in 2005, the Pickering nuclear generating station received a City of Pickering Civic Award for outstanding support and participation in community activities by a local business.

Can the minister tell Durham region families that OPG will remain a safe and active presence in the community for years to come?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes, absolutely, and I appreciate the question from the member from Ajax–Pickering. They don't call Durham region the energy capital of Canada for nothing. I know the member knows that well.

OPG has a proud history of both safety and community engagement. Canada's nuclear industry supports over 70,000 Canadian jobs, but 80% of those jobs are located right here in Ontario in places like Pickering, Oakville, Ajax, Mississauga, Clarington, Northumberland and Bruce county, just to name a few. The safety of Ontario families is always our first priority.

We're committed to working with the federal government to ensure that our nuclear facilities continue to operate at and, in most cases, above world safety standards. That's why I've asked, as I said earlier, the CEOs of Bruce Power and OPG to lead a joint effort to identify lessons learned from the incidents in Japan and apply them to our systems here in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. When Patrick Dillon isn't moonlighting as the spokesman for Premier McGuinty's surrogate attack team, the Working Families Coalition, he is your hand-picked appointee to the College of Trades Appointments Council.

But it looks like his ability to do his partisan attack jobs is interfering with his day job. Last week, Dillon attacked millions of Ontario workers and families when he called non-unionized workers lazy and sloppy. Do you share his opinion of hard-working Ontario families?

Will you make Patrick Dillon apologize for his offensive comments, or will you look the other way so he can continue to run your illegal ad campaign?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member about impugning motive, and I ask her to withdraw that last comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Will you let him continue to front—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, you need to withdraw the comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the important role that the College of Trades plays in our province. As the member is well aware, there have been many debates and discussions in this House particularly around the apprenticeship system and the need for change and reform. As a government, we came forward with the idea of establishing a regulatory college, a college of trades, which would bring together individuals and representatives from all sectors of the economy to talk about the skilled trades, to talk about the apprenticeship system and to move forward.

Pat Dillon was appointed to the Ontario College of Trades. I'm pleased to say that as the business manager and secretary-treasurer of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, he helps represent 150,000 apprentices and tradespeople and represents 13 affiliated unions. He is one voice on the board which brings a very—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier may want to wash his hands of this, but I can say one thing to him: Not this time, Dalton.

Patrick Dillon and his Working—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I said "withdraw."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The College of Trades appointment isn't the only place for Pat Dillon. He and his Working Families Coalition teamed up with backroom McGuinty Liberals to spend millions on ads attacking Ontario Progressive Conservatives. One of the lucrative appointments that you handed over to the head of the Liberal front group, the Working Families Coalition, is a seat on the WSIB. There, the union boss makes $275 a day, supposedly looking out for the well-being of workers. Will you show you do not share Patrick Dillon's views of non-unionized workers in this province by firing him, or will you just look the other way—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: It's kind of interesting that the member mentions Patrick Dillon and the WSIB. She should be very familiar with the fact that, in 1996, the Conservative government appointed Pat Dillon to the WSIB. She might also be aware that, in 1993, the NDP government appointed him to the Ontario Construction Secretariat. He was recently appointed to the Correctional Service Canada advisory board by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

But let me tell you about some of the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just say to a number of government ministers that one of your colleagues is up trying to answer a question, and there are a number of ministers who are shouting the honourable member down. As I remind all members all the time within this House, we need to hear the other side. You should be listening to your colleague.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: Let me share with you some of the other names of people who are on the College of Trades Appointments Council or transition board.

Rod Cameron, the chair: Prior to retiring, Rod Cameron was dean of technology of Fanshawe College in London for five years. Sue Allen is a professional tractor-trailer operator, a certified fleet trainer and examiner and a transportation specialist for film and television productions. Ms. Allen and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SCHOOL EQUITY POLICY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Last week, more high school students were prevented from forming a gay-straight alliance, this time at St. Joseph Catholic secondary school in Mississauga. Ministry of Education policy program memorandum 145 states that boards and schools must "give support to students who wish to participate in gay-straight alliances." Why is the government refusing to enforce this policy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say that we're very proud to have put into place Ontario's first-ever equity policy for Ontario schools. We require that every single Ontario school board have in place an equity policy. Our policies say it is not acceptable to discriminate based on race, gender, religion and sexual orientation.

In grade 5, students are taught that homophobic and racist remarks are wrong and hurtful. In grade 7, students are taught the importance of challenging others whose actions or words could be interpreted as being racist or homophobic. That's all part of our equity policy, which, as I say, we require every single school board in Ontario to adhere to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I agree with everything the Premier said, but he didn't answer my question.

Students in Ontario schools continue to face harassment and violence because of their sexual orientation. That's unacceptable, and I know it's unacceptable to the Premier. Gay-straight alliances can help prevent this abuse.

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If the Premier, as he just said, and the minister are serious about inclusion, equity and the welfare of students, when will the government ensure that students be allowed to form these alliances where and when they want to?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we're very proud of our equity policy. To repeat, we are making it perfectly clear to all our school boards, all our schools, all our principals, all our teachers and all our students that it is unacceptable in Ontario to discriminate based on race, gender, religion or sexual orientation. We have also said that boards can find different ways to ensure that they adhere to those policies.

We, again, are sending the message loudly and clearly to all boards that they must adhere to our equity policy.

TAXATION

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Last week, we saw more proof of what we've been saying and what business owners have been telling us: that harmonizing the sales tax in Ontario is working.

The National Post tweeted a story on Friday that quoted Professor Smart from the University of Toronto. He's the author of a research paper published by the University of Calgary School of Public Policy. Here's what he said about the HST: that "businesses quickly adjusted their prices to pass on tax savings to customers."

Minister, can you give us more detail on how businesses are passing on their savings to the consumers?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

In fact, Professor Smart's report that came out last week is consistent with what we have been saying all along. Some of Professor Smart's findings include: (1) the HST is working; (2) two thirds of business savings are being passed to the consumer. Also, in low-income households, our tax benefits are offsetting the taxes that are paid. This is just the start. Business savings are expected to continue to pass through to consumers.

Now, unlike the math that the opposition parties practise, Professor Smart's report is robust. It is independent, peer-reviewed and, in fact, in line with what the member from Beaches–East York said last week: that "taxes have gone down, literally"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'll take Professor Smart's analysis over any of the vacant stares I see from the opposition benches. I'll do that any day.

Minister, Ontario families want to know about the changes that have occurred since the HST was imple-

mented. Not only are consumers benefiting from the HST through lower prices, but small and medium-sized businesses are telling me that the tax changes are making it easier for them to grow.

Minister, have you got some more detail on how businesses are passing on the savings to the consumer and creating jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Again, I just wanted to repeat that Professor Smart's report is independent, peer-reviewed and, in fact, is in line with what the NDP MPP for Beaches–East York said last week: that "taxes have gone down, literally on all income groups." Perhaps now, maybe, the member's party will admit this, too.

When it comes to businesses, let's talk about Kobayashi Online, which said last week: "We passed through our savings in the first month of the implementation of the HST. We realized savings and had a 10% off sale. It accounts for 20% of our sales for the month of July."

Businesses are telling us that the HST is working. We're going to continue investing in our companies and in the people of Ontario.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Premier. On October 30, 2008, members of the Ontario PC caucus, as well as the other members of this House, supported a bill entitled the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, sponsored by your own party president and fellow Ottawa-area MPP.

Why are you using your party's majority to stall this bill's progress in making Ontario's neighbourhoods safer? Is it because your government is weak on crime? Or is it because you used the party president to pay lip service to stakeholders? Or is it both?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I point out that this is a private member's bill in this House. I have, as I know the member opposite has—we both have a good deal of respect for private members' legislation and the ideas that are brought forward. I certainly commend the member on that being brought forward.

He would also know that the House leaders of the three parties represented in this Legislature sit down to discuss matters of this kind to determine the schedule for bills moving forward. I know that your House leader, if this is as important as it is—and I know to the member it is; I happen to know that—I know that the House leader of the official opposition will want to make that known to the government House leader and the House leader of the third party to determine the schedule for that bill proceeding forward.

I think the member and I agree that the basis of that bill is excellent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The longer you stand there patting yourselves on the back for a job not done, the more you continue to delay the SCAN legislation put forward by your own party president. SCAN is a law in other provinces, and Ottawa's police chief, Vern White, told me just last week: "As the chief of police for Ottawa and a member of the Crime Prevention Ottawa board of directors, I continue to support the development and passing of Bill 106, SCAN legislation. We see it as an opportunity for the police and the community to continue to work on resolving community problems proactively and believe it will make for safer communities and neighbourhoods."

Minister, law enforcement supports this bill and the Ontario PC caucus supports this bill. If you have faith in your own Liberal Party president, you will pass the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act into law. When will the McGuinty government get tough on crime and put SCAN into law?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The House will determine how that bill moves forward. I have great respect for all members of the House.

Talking about crime statistics, we have put 2,300 more police officers on Ontario streets. We've established a first-of-its-kind $51-million guns and gangs strategy. We've invested over $10 million annually in the highly successful Toronto anti-violence intervention strategy. We've invested $16 million to date in the provincial anti-violence intervention strategy. We've increased the budget of the Ontario Provincial Police by nearly $230 million—a full 32% increase. This has produced the kinds of results that I think the people of this province are looking for. As you will see from the chiefs of police around the province, they're very supportive of these kinds of programs. They're having a profound effect. We are taking action, not simply dealing in rhetoric.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Warren Chant was fired as Windsor Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital CEO. He received $300,000 in a severance package. What does it say about the McGuinty Liberal government's priorities when it can find bucketloads of money for hospital executives but can't get a shovel in the ground on a long-term-care facility that was promised four years ago?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to say that the situation at Hôtel-Dieu Grace is such that we determined it was time to send in a supervisor. There were enough issues that warranted that rather extraordinary step, but it was a step that we thought was the right thing to do for the people of the Windsor area who rely on Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital. We have appointed a supervisor. That supervisor has taken stock of the situation at Hôtel-Dieu Grace and did make the decision to have a change in leadership.

It is an event that the supervisor has taken very carefully and very responsibly for the benefit of the people of Windsor. I look forward to the supplementary when I can provide an update on our new long-term-care home.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is not the only instance of golden handshakes for hospital CEOs. Reports indicate that the Niagara Health System is in the midst of severance negotiations with Debbie Sevenpifer after she was fired a couple of months ago. How many hundreds of thousands of dollars will Niagara families be on the hook for in this latest sweetheart severance deal? Will the Premier actually make that figure public?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows that these severance packages are part of changing leadership, they are part of respecting contracts and they are publicly available. All the people who work in our health care sector with incomes over $100,000 do have that income reported on the sunshine list every year. That includes severance packages, so this information will become public.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Attorney General. Domestic violence is something that unfortunately exists in all of our communities. It often occurs behind closed doors and it has serious impacts on its victims and on society in general. Victims suffer not only physical but emotional and psychological effects, and the effect it has on children is extremely detrimental.

When victims of domestic violence take the important step of leaving an abusive relationship and initiate separation or divorce proceedings, they often fear for themselves and for their children. This is a time when there is the greatest risk of further violence. Concerns for their safety and for the safety of their children weigh on victims as they attempt to navigate through the Family Court system.

Can the Attorney General please tell this House what he is doing to protect and support victims of domestic violence as they take this courageous step?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Oak Ridges–Markham makes a very important point: How are we supporting people—predominantly women and children—at a time of terrible crisis and great emotional strain? We're working hard to improve the Family Court system, but it can be very confusing, very time-consuming and very slow. They're often facing a party that has experienced legal counsel. So how do they navigate their way through this system?

We've heard from my colleague the MPP for Oak Ridges–Markham and from community agencies that we need to take an additional step, so just the other week we introduced a Family Court support worker program. In every court jurisdiction in this province we'll be able to provide court workers who can take the individual, give them good advice about community resources, help them through the court appearance and appear with them in court, if necessary, to provide that emotional support and that tangible community-based support as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham there are many great organizations that are already working with victims and survivors of domestic violence, such as Yellow Brick House and Women's Support Network of York Region. They have vast experience dealing with the unique needs and concerns of these victims, and they understand that there may be long-lasting feelings of fear, powerlessness, depression, anger and self-blame. Victims of domestic violence may feel alone and may have trouble even talking with people about the abuse they have suffered.

Can the Attorney General please tell us how he is going to ensure that the new Family Court support workers are knowledgeable in the complex dynamics of domestic abuse so they can effectively support victims as they proceed through the Family Court process?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Through the member's advice and the advice of great community agencies such as the ones in her riding that she's mentioned, we've identified this as a real issue. We're setting up a provincial network that will provide advice and training for the workers who are going to be performing this extremely important and desperately needed work throughout the province. That approach of listening to the front lines is the approach we've taken as we support women and children through times of crisis.

We've changed the restraining order system that wasn't working, to toughen it up. We're changing the family law system entirely so that it's faster, less confrontational and more affordable. We're taking the position that you need to listen to the people that provide front-line, on-the-ground support to help women and children at their moment of crisis. This government is there to support them, and we will be, throughout this very difficult time.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. The minister has spent the last two years making promises to forestry companies across Ontario, even as he has choked off their wood supply with his tenure-restructuring plan. He promised better days ahead; instead, they got hydro hikes and more red tape.

Last month, the minister made another stunning McGuinty backtrack: an expensive bureaucratic experiment instead of a stable wood supply for our hard-hit foresters. Last month, the minister tabled a bill to create new forest management corporations and broad new arbitrary powers.

Minister, why are you hiding from and passing off your responsibilities to these new, unelected and unaccountable forestry LHINs?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Obviously, we're very pleased that we're moving forward on the modernization of the forest tenure system as well as moving forward on a wood supply competition that is bringing thousands of people back to work and putting our crown fibre back to work as well.

In terms of the modernized tenure system, we are working very closely with industry and, in fact, we have an opportunity to meet with them on a regular basis. We believe that the models we're putting forward enhance shareholder sustainable forest licences. Combined with the testing of principles of our model, the local forest management corporation is going to revitalize the forestry sector, something that we know we will continue to work closely with the sector on as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: While he's revitalizing the forestry sector, there's nothing left with it. Minister, you've hit the forestry industry with high hydro rates, more red tape and higher prices. Environmental NGOs proclaimed two years ago that they played you and your government like a fiddle.

Companies like McKenzie Forest Products near Sioux Lookout have been waiting for one thing: a stable and certain wood supply. If they don't get it soon, they're through. Your forestry experiments are putting those 330 jobs in jeopardy, and you know that. You've cut off the wood supply with your tenure review, and now you're creating these tree LHINs to make sure that no forestry company survives your war against the industry.

We can see the results. Under your watch, we've lost 40,000 forestry jobs and 60 mills. Minister, why has the McGuinty government waged a war against Ontario's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It is so sad that the member will not see the positive news that's coming out of the forestry sector, particularly relating to the wood supply competition. Last week, we announced wood supply offers to two operations in the Greenstone area that are going to bring 250 people back to work in the Geraldton-Longlac-Nakina area. We've made 16 offers that have been out there publicly; we've made other offers as well. Over 1,000 jobs are coming back to the forestry sector.

Part of that process, may I say, is also working very closely with industry on the modernization of our forest tenure system, one that all members of this House told us we needed to move forward on, and indeed we are doing that. I'm delighted that we're having an opportunity to debate it in second reading, I'm looking forward to it moving towards committee, and I'm looking forward to third reading so we can indeed revitalize the forestry sector with our wood supply competition, bringing thousands back to work and also modernizing the tenure system in a fashion that will bring the jobs back to the people of Ontario.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

M^me^ France Gélinas: My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, last week in Thunder Bay, another trial was delayed when Justice Helen Pierce dismissed about 100 potential jurors for lack of aboriginal representation in the jury pool. The latest verdict from Ontario's highest court clearly shows deficiencies in both of your ministries.

Minister, you can no longer hide behind your 2008 excuse that this isn't a case for an inquiry; it's a case of getting the assistance needed from First Nation leadership—your words, not mine—when your staff repeatedly turned away the Pierre family, who were seeking justice for their deceased child.

The aboriginal community of northern Ontario would like to know: How about now? Is now a case for your government to call an inquiry and overturn the discriminatory practices that have excluded aboriginal people from the jury roll of Ontario?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Now is the time to do what we've been trying to do for a couple of years and what I'd love to do, which is to get greater representation by making sure that we get up-to-date resident rolls from different communities.

In fact, over the past couple of years, the officials at the ministry have been working very closely with Treaty 3 chiefs. We've been providing information sessions, working with chiefs, working with communities to get greater knowledge about who's on the rolls, because if we don't have them—since INAC stopped sending them to us—we can't get them onto the jury rolls and therefore make them eligible for jury representation.

We're looking forward to working with all other chiefs in different communities. We want to give people the opportunity to participate in the jury process. We're very interested in further initiatives. My view has always been, "Let's get on with it now." We know what the issues are. It's about identifying members and getting them onto the rolls, and the chiefs and the PTO leadership will be able to help us. I look forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: The Ontario Court of Appeal validates the gravity of this issue, and I strongly urge you to do the same. The answer you just gave me is the exact same answer you gave in 2008. We're now in 2011 and we're still confronted with the exact same issue: There are no aboriginal people in the jury pools.

Representatives from your office have said that this ruling is in regard to a narrow issue. I find that very worrisome. Does the minister agree that aboriginal participation in the justice system is a narrow issue?

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Hon. Christopher Bentley: We want to provide everyone with the opportunity to participate in jury panels; absolutely everyone. In order to do that, just so we understand the process, we need to know who the people are. In municipalities like Toronto, London, Cornwall or elsewhere, that's done through a number of different means. With First Nation communities, we used to get updated rolls from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. They stopped providing them, so now we rely on communities or individuals to self-identify.

We've been working with the chiefs in a number of different communities to make sure that we know who's there so we can provide greater input rolls and therefore greater representation. We're really looking forward to

making progress. We'd love whatever assistance my colleague can provide, wherever she can provide it, so that we can do the education, get more names on the rolls, make sure we ever increase the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Today is the first day of spring, and we are reminded that there are two seasons in Ontario: winter and construction season.

With construction season comes road repair and rehabilitation of our extensive road network. What comes with construction work can sometimes cause delays and impact the local economy.

I know that Ontario highways are among the safest in North America, but some of my constituents in Ottawa–Orléans have requested information on how the Ministry of Transportation plans for this important maintenance work. I remind them that our government has even more work to do due to years of underfunding by both the NDP and Conservative governments.

Minister, I want to assure my constituents that our government is actively monitoring the safety of our roads in a responsible way, that we are repairing the right roads at the right time. Can the minister please explain what the government's plans are to ensure our roads that are under repair are in need of it and that attention is being paid to the safe repair of all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for his question.

As the members of the House know, the Ministry of Transportation is responsible for managing a $59-billion highway infrastructure network. Since 2003, we've met that challenge by committing over $13 billion to support that work.

I often talk about the baby boom infrastructure that goes along with our baby boom population. Like us, it's aging, and we need to remain vigilant in making sure that that infrastructure is upgraded. We continually monitor the highways. If there's a situation that needs attention, we get on it right away.

For example, the Ministry of Transportation has a five-year plan to replace and repair culverts on Highway 417. To achieve that plan, we've tripled our financing from $1 million to $3 million. Not only that; we've initiated an MTO culvert data system, an inventory system, to make sure we know where the problems are and when they have to be dealt with.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, I'm pleased to hear that our government is taking action to ensure the safety of Ontarians travelling on our roads and making the right investments at the right time.

I understand that the Ministry of Transportation has substantial oversight to ensure that these roads are built to the best specifications possible.

While your answer goes a long way to helping me speak to my constituents about this important topic, I would also appreciate it if you would go one step further and elaborate on the layers of oversight MTO has to ensure that engineers and contractors are designing and building our roads safely. What oversight does the government have to ensure that our government is building our roads to the best possible standards and that we are building them using the right materials?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's interesting: The members opposite deride this question, but I think it's very important for Ontarians to understand how we keep our infrastructure safe. It's very easy to take for granted that we have safe roads, but we need to make sure that people understand how that works.

In 2007, what we did at MTO was we introduced industry-leading design guidelines, and that was after consultation with Ontario's industry partners. We developed these guidelines in consultation with those partners to make sure that the province's top engineers are able to use a consistent and scientifically objective methodology to select the materials that are used in building roads and culverts.

We go farther: We have made sure that the product is approved by a third party at the point of manufacture, and that contractors' work has to withstand post-installation maintenance standards. In fact, other jurisdictions are looking to Ontario and looking to MTO as to how we develop the guidelines and how we will renew them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm just standing on a point that was raised during question period. The member from Nepean–Carleton stood up and claimed to have a quote from Patrick Dillon. I have the column that she quoted from and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, that's not a point of order. The member should—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew, who is making a comment—I was about to comment, but I was having difficulty expressing my thoughts. It's not a point of order. I remind all honourable members that they can only correct their own records.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome some guests of mine in the Speaker's gallery: Dr. John Ratey and his research team of Dr. Alex Thornton, Dr. Lindsay Shaw and Dr. Chris Gilbert, visiting from Harvard University. Welcome, to the four of you, to Queen's Park today.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WOODBINE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today, I would like to stand and acknowledge the recent achievement of the Woodbine Entertainment Group. Woodbine Entertainment Group is the largest operator of horse racing in Canada, operating tracks in Toronto and in Campbellville, Ontario, in my riding.

On March 7, 2011, Jane Holmes, vice-president of corporate affairs, accepted the Century International Quality ERA Gold Award for total quality management on behalf of Woodbine Entertainment Group.

At the time, Woodbine Entertainment Group president and CEO, Nick Eaves, said that the Woodbine Entertainment Group "is honoured to receive this international recognition of our business practices and corporate social responsibility ideals." He continued, "It is a well-deserved tribute to the commitment of our management team and staff to improving all aspects of our business operations."

The award was presented in Geneva, Switzerland, and provided international recognition to Woodbine Entertainment Group for their business practices and corporate social responsibility. The award is sponsored by close to 30 media publications which focus on innovations, technology, new products and brand growth, and which support change and market trends.

I would like to commend the Woodbine Entertainment Group for their ongoing corporate giving, and congratulate them on receiving such a prestigious award of recognition.

TRILLIUM HOSPITAL

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Since 1955, the Mississauga Trillium hospital has been providing excellent health care services to the residents of Mississauga–East Cooksville. I want to commend the Trillium hospital for their commitment to publicly funded health care.

The Trillium hospital has been a leader in delivering lower wait times in many key procedures like cancer care, hip and knee replacements, emergency wait times and MRI diagnostics. Some 16,000 MRIs are done at the Trillium hospital annually, and now, with a new $1-million investment in a new MRI machine, another 3,000-plus diagnostics will be done. These procedures will help surgeons and other health care professionals better serve their patients.

This comes after a $150-million expansion of the Trillium hospital, which provided 135 more beds. It also added more doctors, nurses and equipment, like this MRI machine, to continue its quest to provide excellent health care in a timely fashion, like it has done for the last 56 years. This means that many, many more patients who are being sent to the Trillium hospital from the new Mississauga East–Cooksville community health centre and the new family health team in Mississauga East–Cooksville will be treated faster than ever before.

Wait times have dropped by as much as 70%. This is good news for the residents and patients of Mississauga East–Cooksville.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Frank Klees: Some time ago, my constituent Doug Mossop wrote a letter to the Premier, to which he still has not received an answer. Out of frustration, he asked me to read his letter here in hopes of getting the Premier's attention.

"Dear Premier,

"Here I am pondering if you will have my support in the future because of the choice you as a government are making.

"First of all, I, like many Ontarians, do not like the HST. In British Columbia, they did not tax a number of items, as you did here, and the voters have said to get rid of the tax.

"May I remind the Premier that any government who has brought in this tax has been defeated.

"Next, if you really want some wise advice, do not let the Ontario Energy Board give the energy providers an increase because they lost a court case. Also, a 6.2% increase is way out of line, as most people will never see a raise in their paycheques anywhere near this amount. People cannot afford these increases you keep tagging on.

"Finally, you are getting ready to bill the taxpayers billions for what OPG wants to do. Let them pay their own way. In my final words, I wish to remind you that Adam Beck was right. Our electricity utility is not a luxury but a necessity. No part of it should be in private hands. It should go back to being fully regulated. Premier, you can turn things around by doing the right things. I hope you will actually listen.

"Doug Mossop,

"Newmarket, Ontario."

OAKVILLE SOCCER CLUB

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about the Oakville Soccer Club. All soccer players in Oakville are now gearing up for the outdoor season, and the club is demonstrating once again that they're changing the way that soccer clubs operate in this country.

Earlier this month I was on hand as the club, in partnership with Absolute Soccer and Umbro, officially launched the opening of the doors to The Red Zone store and revealed a brand new Oakville fanwear line. This

continues to solidify their position as a leader in the Canadian soccer community.

Many around here would have heard me brag that the Oakville Soccer Club is the largest community soccer organization in Canada and that it's got over 12,000 members and over 900 volunteer and professional coaches. Their tradition of excellence includes nine national championships and over 50 Ontario Cups, and a large number of those players have been selected to represent Canada at the international level.

Under the excellent leadership of CEO Paul Varian, technical director and former Canadian team captain Jason de Vos, and director of operations Lynn Joiner, I have no doubt that the Oakville Soccer Club is going to continue this tradition of winning and serving the young people of our community for many years to come.

R.J. BURNSIDE AND ASSOCIATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to recognize the 40th anniversary of a thriving business in my riding, R. J. Burnside and Associates Ltd. The company, started by Bob Burnside at his kitchen table, has grown substantially in the past 40 years. Bob's son John has gone on to assume the leadership of the company in 2005.

Today, the firm's Orangeville location serves as the company's corporate headquarters, with offices located throughout Ontario and Manitoba, as well as project offices in Barbados and Mozambique. Burnside chose to open their doors in Orangeville in 1970 because they considered the town an attractive location, both professionally and for their families.

Recognized as a leader in community infrastructure, Burnside offers conventional engineering disciplines as well as specialized expertise in various technical fields. They are a unique company, one that has their own First Nations division. Mervin Dewasha, who leads the First Nations division, was one of last year's winners of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation Award. Mr. Dewasha and Neegan Burnside, a branch of R. J. Burnside, have completed approximately 1,200 projects for more than 200 First Nations communities across North America.

Burnside is well known in the community as a great supporter of local projects such as the Horning's Mills hall and food bank, Habitat for Humanity and Hospice Caledon, to name just a few.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Bob and John on their 40 years of business success in the Orangeville community, and I wish you many more years of success.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: On March 31, Thursday of next week, we will be debating Bill 44 in second reading, a bill to ban the use of temporary replacement workers—better known as "anti-scab." Since last introduced in October 2009, a provincial group has been formed. They are the Ontario Coalition Against Replacement Employees, better known as OCARE for short. The president is Mrs. Selena Clement Mikkhola and the vice-president is Joann Marshall. They have recruited activists from throughout the province. They have reviewed the literature from the economists to see what the economic impacts are of such a law, as well as the social impact.

The facts are that although strikes and lockouts are rare—95% to 97% of collective agreements get settled without work disruption—for the 3% to 5% we see a steady rise in the use of temporary replacement workers. I can give the example of Vale in my riding, as well as a strike in the riding of Brant that has been going on for over two and a half years, where temporary replacement workers are being used—and the list goes on.

I know that temporary replacement workers are an emotional issue for many, but I encourage everybody to learn the facts, to learn the economic and the social facts. There will be a rally here at Queen's Park on March 31 organized by the OFL, and I encourage everybody to come and see.

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FIVE DAYS FOR THE HOMELESS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to take the opportunity to share with the Legislature a meaningful fundraising initiative undertaken last week by students at Carleton University's Sprott School of Business in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

The national Five Days for the Homeless campaign challenges students to forgo the comforts of home and live outside for five full days to raise awareness about youth homelessness. This challenge clearly illustrates the difficult situation faced by too many vulnerable people in our communities nationwide, while raising much-needed funds through donations to benefit important services for homeless and vulnerable youth in our community.

These students spent the full five days outside in difficult March weather with only a pillow and a sleeping bag, whatever shelter they could piece together from found items, and with no access to facilities except those open to the public during regular hours. They could not bring food or drink and had to rely on the kindness of passersby for sustenance. Moreover, any donations of non-perishable food were kept for donation later on to those who go hungry in our community.

I was pleased to visit these dedicated students last week during their five days, and I want to offer my gratitude and congratulations to Mark Featherstonhaugh, Lauren Gouchie, Aisling McCaffrey and Meha Sethi, and the help of Eric Berrigan, Michael Fleming and Jessica Karam for taking part in this initiative. They did a great job raising, over $7,000 for Rideau Street Youth Enterprise and Operation Come Home.

Congratulations also to the participants at the University of Ottawa, who raised over $9,500 for the campaign in their effort. Together, not only did they raise $15,000,

but they also had a very meaningful role in raising awareness about youth homelessness in our communities.

CARREFOUR DES FEMMES DU SUD-OUEST DE L'ONTARIO

M. Khalil Ramal: Je viens juste d'assister à une réception pour la Semaine de la francophonie organisée par la ministre Meilleur. Aussi, le samedi 5 mars dernier, j'ai eu l'occasion d'assister à une conférence organisée par le Carrefour des Femmes du Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario. Cette conférence en reconnaissance de la Journée internationale de la femme a porté sur le thème du viol des femmes en temps de conflits armés.

Je voudrais aussi profiter de cette occasion pour reconnaître le travail important fait chaque jour par le Carrefour des Femmes du Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario. Carrefour des Femmes maintient des services et des programmes en français pour soutenir les femmes francophones qui ont subi de l'agression à caractère sexuel ou toute autre forme de violence contre les femmes.

L'organisation fournit aussi des soutiens pratiques tels qu'un service d'accompagnement et des programmes comme Café-causette, qui offre une variété d'activités sociales, de détente et d'information pour femmes.

Carrefour des Femmes est une organisation qui fait une contribution très importante pour les francophones dans ma communauté.

NOWRUZ

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today is Nowruz, the first day of spring. Nowruz is a rich tradition followed by many countries. It marks the first day of spring, and I'm proud to see this wonderful celebration being recognized in our great province of Ontario and in Canada.

Nowruz is widely celebrated in various central Asian countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan, and in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Iraq and Syria. The Baha'is, the Zoroastrians and the Ismaili Shia Muslims, who trace their origins to Iran, also celebrate Nowruz.

Nowruz has been celebrated for at least 3,000 years. It is the rebirth of nature and can easily be celebrated by all the people in the world. About 200,000 Ontarians from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds celebrate Nowruz every year. Numerous celebrations have taken place throughout the GTA and were attended by a number of my colleagues, including Premier McGuinty, Minister Wynne and Minister Hoskins—just to name a few.

May this new year bring harmony and prosperity and peace to everyone who celebrates Nowruz around the world. I would like to extend my warmest greetings and best wishes for a festive Nowruz.

Remarks in Persian.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2011
LOI DE 2011 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE NÉERLANDAIS

Mrs. Witmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month / Projet de loi 166, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine néerlandais.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to introduce this bill today. It's co-sponsored by MPP Van Bommel, who like me has Dutch heritage, and also by MPP Cheri DiNovo.

This would recognize the friendship that has developed between Canada and the Netherlands as a result of the liberation of Holland by our troops, and also the contribution made by the people of Dutch heritage to this province.

SUPPLY ACT, 2011
LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2011

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011 / Projet de loi 167, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I have no statement today, Speaker.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 72 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LA FRANCOPHONIE

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Cette semaine, nous célébrons la francophonie partout en Ontario, au Canada et dans le monde entier à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la francophonie, qui se tenait hier.

This year's celebrations have two overarching themes: how la Francophonie enriches us culturally, and a focus on youth.

Ces thèmes s'inscrivent parfaitement dans les stratégies du gouvernement de l'Ontario et j'en suis très heureuse.

Depuis 2003, l'Ontario s'est attardé à redonner une place de choix aux francophones dans les affaires civiles et au sein de leur gouvernement. Une population francophone et francophile est enracinée dans l'histoire de l'Ontario depuis 400 ans, et nous accordons la même reconnaissance aux communautés culturelles francophones qui s'établissent ici en grand nombre.

Comme le dit si bien le thème des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, cet organisme chapeauté par la Fondation canadienne pour le dialogue des cultures, il faut « interagir pour s'enrichir ». En Ontario, nous croyons fermement que l'interaction avec et entre les cultures est une source d'enrichissement inestimable et j'en suis très fière. Nous sommes une société ouverte sur la francophonie, ouverte sur le Canada et ouverte sur le monde.

L'Ontario possède maintenant l'un des meilleurs systèmes d'éducation dans le monde entier. D'après les derniers rapports de l'Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques, OCDE, les élèves de l'Ontario âgés de 15 ans sont parmi les meilleurs lecteurs au monde. Notre taux d'obtention de diplômes est maintenant à 81 % et ne cesse d'augmenter, et notre province est un modèle dans le monde entier dans le domaine de l'apprentissage et du suivi scolaire.

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D'ailleurs, il y a une dizaine de jours, le ministre français de l'Éducation nationale, Luc Chatel, comme tant d'autres représentants étrangers avant lui, était en visite à Toronto pour s'inspirer des meilleures pratiques éducatives développées chez nous dans nos écoles de langue française.

Après le succès de la maternelle à temps plein dans le système d'éducation de langue française, notre gouvernement est fier d'étendre le système à toute la province. C'est une reconnaissance du leadership et de l'excellence de nos écoles françaises et des pratiques d'éducation de la petite enfance qui ont été développées dans nos écoles de langue française.

La politique d'aménagement linguistique mise en place par notre gouvernement en 2004 fait désormais de nos écoles de véritables lieux d'épanouissement culturelle pour nos jeunes francophones.

Au cours des dernières années, l'Ontario a aussi connu l'un des revirements les plus spectaculaires dans le secteur de la santé. Nos avons fait des progrès immenses dans l'accès et la qualité des soins de santé, et les collectivités francophones de l'Ontario possèdent maintenant, grâce aux entités de planification créés l'année dernière, des outils de gouvernance qui leur permettent de mieux cibler les besoins et mieux orienter les ressources en santé. Les fournisseurs de soins de santé en français en Ontario contribuent largement au succès des initiatives gouvernementales dans le domaine de la santé.

Cette semaine, les francophones célèbrent partout au Canada. Nous célébrons notre patrimoine culturel. Nous célébrons notre place au sein de la confédération canadienne. Et nous célébrons notre influence dans les affaires internationales.

We are fortunate to live in a province and a country that place such high value on harmony between peoples. C'est ce qui nous distingue comme Ontariens et comme Canadiens.

L'Ontario ne serait pas la terre d'accueil et la terre de droits qu'elle est devenue sans l'apport des francophones. J'invite donc mes collègues députés à célébrer la francophonie dans leurs communautés. Je vous invite à vous joindre à ces festivités qui nous rassemblent comme peuple, comme province et comme pays.

À l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la francophonie, nous soulignons encore une fois la présence et la contribution des francophones et des francophiles partout en Ontario.

Je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue aux francophones qui sont ici en Chambre et qui sont venus célébrer à midi avec moi la Semaine de la francophonie. Je voudrais aussi remercier mon collègue le député de London–Fanshawe pour avoir célébré hier, lui aussi, la Journée internationale de la francophonie.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

M. Peter Shurman: Je suis très heureux, à titre de porte-parole de l'opposition pour les Affaires francophones, de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes durant la semaine internationale de la francophonie.

C'est nécessaire de temps en temps de nous souvenir que notre communauté francophone est une des deux nations fondatrices de notre province. Nous avons créé, l'année passée, un jour spécial, soit le 25 septembre, pour commémorer les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, mais ça ne suffit pas. La semaine internationale de la francophonie est une opportunité pour nous à faire exactement ça.

Ici en Ontario, nous avons pris des initiatives pendant les années pour signaler que notre monde francophone est important dans un sens très spécial. Depuis les 35 dernières années, avant l'adoption de la Loi 24, nous avons eu un jour, le 25 septembre, comme jour significatif parce que le drapeau francophone de l'Ontario vert et blanc a été levé à Sudbury le 25 septembre 1975. Le drapeau fut adopté par l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario en 1977. Je suis très fier d'en avoir un dans mon propre bureau. Maintenant, nous avons en

Ontario un jour exceptionnel pour élever notre communauté francophone.

La semaine internationale de la francophonie est célébrée dans 52 nations et provinces du monde, et le dimanche—hier—était désigné comme jour international de la francophonie. Il y avait beaucoup d'activités autour du monde et partout dans notre province pour commémorer cette semaine et le jour spécial hier.

De la part du caucus progressiste-conservateur, j'offre les salutations de notre leader, M. Tim Hudak.

Nous devons reconnaître le rôle spécial qu'occupe la communauté francophone dans l'histoire de notre province. La présence francophone en Ontario date depuis 400 ans. Ils sont parmi les premiers peuples fondateurs de notre merveilleuse nation. Pendant la majorité du 20e siècle et au-delà, le Parti PC a contribué à la promotion et à la conservation de l'aspect unique que tient cette communauté en Ontario. Le dynamise de la communauté francophone que nous voyons aujourd'hui confirme que la langue et la culture françaises demeurent une partie intégrante et fondamentale de la société ontarienne.

Félicitations.

Mme France Gélinas: Il me fait aussi extrêmement plaisir de célébrer la semaine internationale de la francophonie, un événement qui est célébré dans mon comté de Nickel Belt, dans Sudbury et dans le Nord-Est. On y met le paquet. Ça commence avec les dîners de la francophonie. On a des spectacles des arts de la scène, les arts visuels—tout y passe. C'est très bien et c'est souvent très le fun.

Il est sûr que la semaine internationale de la francophonie est un bon temps pour démontrer ce que la francophonie a fait, mais c'est également un bon temps pour démontrer ce qui nous reste à faire.

Il y a près d'un an maintenant, j'avais amené le fait qu'on n'avait pas de plaques d'immatriculation personnalisées en français—« Tant à découvrir. » C'est maintenant plus disponible, mais c'est encore difficile. Je rêve un peu du temps où ça va être aussi facile d'avoir nos services en français qu'en anglais.

Même chose du côté de la qualité des soins. Si on regarde dans les régions désignées, l'accès aux services de santé en français est encore difficile et ardu. Il faut demander nos services. Quand tu es dans une position où tu as besoin de soins, ce n'est pas un bon temps de faire de la revendication de tes droits. Ça devrait être plus facile, mais ce ne l'est pas; c'est encore un défi. Quand tu vis en français en Ontario, tu ne descends jamais ta garde parce que tu ne sais pas quand le prochain défi va te regarder.

Des choses aussi simples qu'avoir un gouvernement qui respecte les accents français—moi, mon nom est Gélinas; ce n'est pas Gelinas. Avoir un « é » quand je fais affaire avec le gouvernement de l'Ontario est comme arracher des dents, et je ne suis pas la seule qui a un accent dans son nom. Il y a beaucoup de francophones qui sont dans la même situation que moi, et on ne vient pas à bout d'avoir des accents francophones quand on s'adresse au gouvernement de l'Ontario.

Je veux vous parler un petit peu du Collège Boréal. Le Collège Boréal est un joyau dans le nord de l'Ontario. C'est un collège de langue française dont on est très fier et que le gouvernement néo-démocrate a mis en place, en passant. En tout cas, il a grandi et il va très bien.

Depuis huit ans, il s'occupe du Collège Glendon à Toronto. Ils ont tout essayé pour avoir de nouveaux locaux. Ils ont essayé des partenariats, ils ont essayé de négocier avec les conseils scolaires, ils ont essayé de faire des partages des locaux—ça n'a pas fonctionné. Finalement, ils ont trouvé un site où les étudiants francophones de Toronto pourront avoir un bibliothèque comme tous les autres étudiants de collège, et ils pourront avoir un cafétéria pour avoir un lieu de rencontre, mais je vous dis, monsieur le Président, ça fait huit ans qu'on attend. Donc, ce qui arrive, c'est que les cours sont pleins, les locaux sont pleins, et les étudiants francophones, faute de places, s'en vont vers les collèges anglophones quand vraiment ils veulent faire leurs études en français. Le Collège Boréal est prêt à offrir ces cours-là. Il est prêt à les recevoir, mais il n'a pas suffisamment de locaux.

Pourquoi est-ce que ça prend huit ans, du côté francophone, pour reconnaître qu'un collège a besoin d'un bibliothèque, d'un cafétéria et d'un campus pour que les gens se retrouvent? Mais non; nous, on est francophone. C'est toujours deux poids, deux mesures. C'est toujours plus difficile.

Même chose du côté des écoles françaises. Quand le gouvernement a mis en place la maternelle à temps plein et les garderies avant et après, c'était annoncé comme si c'était une nouvelle merveille. Bien, depuis 10 ans en Ontario, dans les conseils francophones, ça existe déjà. Est-ce qu'on a regardé aux modèles francophones? Est-ce qu'on a regardé les meilleures pratiques qui s'étaient développées chez les francophones pendant 10 ans? Pas de tout. On a mis en place un modèle tellement restreint que les conseils scolaires francophones n'ont même pas été capables de continuer ce qu'ils avaient mis en place : des modèles gagnants.

1330

Là, on est en train de faire marche arrière un petit peu. Moi, je dis : « Pourquoi, quand on a mis ça en place, on n'a pas regardé ce qui se passe du côté francophone? » C'est comme si on n'existait pas.

Je veux quand même finir sur des notes positives parce qu'il y en a plein. C'est la 38e Nuit sur l'étang à Sudbury le samedi prochain. C'est à l'auditorium Fraser de l'Université Laurentienne. Venez voir La Volée d'Castors, Alexandre Désilets et la sensation acadienne Radio Radio. En plus, en partenariat avec le Contact interculturel francophone de Sudbury, nous avons le plaisir de vous présenter Muna Mingole, la flamme bleue du Cameroun.

Il y aura des tournois de euchre au Club Amical et un dîner au club d'âge d'or d'Azilda. Que ce soit le Carrefour francophone, le centre de santé communautaire, les

conseils scolaires ou le Collège Boréal, tout le monde se donne la main pour s'assurer qu'à Sudbury, la francophonie, on la fête et on la célèbre. On montre nos couleurs et on en est fier. J'aurais espérance que toute cette fierté-là va aider, peut-être, le gouvernement de M. McGuinty à reconnaître que la francophonie est vibrante et existante. Le gouvernement a besoin de nous reconnaître pour ce qu'on est.

PETITIONS

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: "Whereas there are ... 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Travis to bring it to the Clerk.

PARAMEDICS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I bring this petition to the Legislature on behalf of some of my constituents in Watford.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

Of course I'll sign this.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to have the time to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent" further "contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine."

I am pleased to sign this in support of the municipality of Scugog as well as Uxbridge.

PARAMEDICS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I support this petition. I will sign it and give it to Leighton, who I think just started today.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Progressive Conservative MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

"Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

"Whereas Progressive Conservative MPP Bob Bailey's 'A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food' provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario's most vulnerable;

"Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately" call and "pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature to it and send it down with Cherechi.

TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS

M^me^ France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui m'a été parvenue par l'unité 65 de la FEESO.

« Attendu que les grèves et les lock-out sont rares; en moyenne, 97 % des conventions collectives sont négociées sans arrêt de travail; et

« Attendu que des lois contre le remplacement temporaire des travailleurs existent au Québec depuis 1978 et en Colombie-Britannique depuis 1993, et les gouvernements successifs de ces deux provinces n'ont jamais abrogé ces lois; et

« Attendu que la loi contre le remplacement temporaire des travailleurs a réduit la longueur et la discorde des conflits du travail; et

« Attendu que le remplacement temporaire des travailleurs pendant une grève ou un lock-out compromet le tissu social d'une communauté à court et à long terme ainsi que le bien-être de ses résidents », ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « d'adopter une loi interdisant le remplacement temporaire de travailleurs pendant une grève ou un lock-out. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Logan de l'amener au greffier.

1340

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians who now live in long-term-care homes are increasingly older, frailer and have greater complex care needs;

"Whereas our elder parents, family and friends deserve to live with dignity and respect;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government failed to revolutionize long-term care and broke its promise to seniors to provide $6,000 in personal care, per resident;

"Whereas five years of Liberal inaction has restricted Ontario's ability to meet the demands of our aging population;

"Whereas more than 24,000 Ontarians are currently waiting for an LTC bed;

"Whereas Ontario funds significantly less resident care than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick;

"Whereas dedicated LTC homes are short-staffed and have not been given resources to hire enough front-line workers to provide the level of care residents require;

"Whereas devoted LTC staff are burdened by cumbersome government regulations;

"Whereas some 35,000 seniors are living in LTC beds which do not meet more home-like design standards introduced in 1998 by the former PC government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government must enhance long-term care by:

"—initiating a sector-wide staffing increase of 4,500 full-time positions within a year;

"—expediting the redevelopment of Ontario's 35,000 oldest long-term-care beds by providing adequate support and funding;

"—achieving an average of three worked hours of personal care, per day, within a year;

"—simplifying the regulations which govern nursing homes;

"—producing a comprehensive plan with benchmarks to reduce LTC wait lists of more than 24,000 people;

"—addressing inflationary pressures by adequately funding the increased operating costs of LTC homes."

I support the petition and am pleased to affix my name to it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I present this on behalf of Carol Mitchell, the member for Huron–Bruce.

"Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

"Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

"ARCH Disability Law Centre, supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations, urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"—Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

"—Make the application and funding allocation processes transparent; and

"—Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need."

I will sign this as well.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas soaring hydro costs across the province are making electricity unaffordable for many hard-working Ontario families and seniors;

"Whereas energy experts suggest that over the course of 2010" and 2011, "residential hydro bills in Ontario will increase" at least "26% or more, costing a minimum of $304 per year for the average homeowner;

"Whereas, over the last year alone, the McGuinty Liberal government has added $150 per household in hydro generation premiums, $50 in smart meter fees and then placed $98 in harmonized sales taxes on the average Ontario household's hydro bill;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's smart meters are forcing hard-working and busy Ontarians to pay exorbitant premiums to do regular chores, such as laundry, outside of the Premier's 'preferred' time-of-use energy schedule;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty Liberal government immediately reduce hydro rates for all Ontarians, cease with the time-of-use pricing and remove the HST tax placed upon electricity, as it is an essential service to hard-working Ontario families."

I agree with this petition and will send it down with Grace.

TAXATION

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this very short petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask quickly climbing page Devon to bring it to the Clerk.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I think paramedics do a great job. They get lots of petitions about them, and I have one as well.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I'll have the young page take that to you, Mr. Speaker.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and send it to the table via page Sydney.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO FOREST TENURE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA MODERNISATION DU RÉGIME DE TENURE FORESTIÈRE EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 8, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011 and to amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur la modernisation du régime de tenure forestière en Ontario et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted to have the opportunity today to speak to Bill 151, the forest tenure and pricing review legislation, as a proud northerner. I'm sure that you understand, Mr. Speaker, as others do in the House, how important the forestry industry is to our region and to our communities.

In North Bay and in Nipissing, where I'm from, we have Tembec, we have Columbia and we're not too far away from Grant Forest Products. A lot of people involved in the forestry sector and in the supports to the forestry sector are situated in North Bay. In fact, we have a great number of people who work at Tembec in Timiskaming who live in North Bay, and we're pleased to have them as part of our community. So I recognize the importance of the forestry sector to our province and, in particular, to our region.

I also recognize and have spent a great deal of time working with the forestry sector in northern Ontario over the last number of years as they've gone through a transformation and a very difficult period in forestry in our province and in our country and, in fact, worldwide. Our forestry sector is transforming itself. It is a large undertaking to transform a sector that has been in existence for so long, but they are doing that. As part of that, our government has contributed a great deal through reducing energy costs, providing assistance in cogeneration, providing a lot of support and assistance to the forestry sector through their transformation, and again today through the forest tenure and pricing review legislation that we've introduced.

This proposed legislation will modernize Ontario's tenure and pricing system so that we can put Ontario's wood back to work and continue to build our new forest economy.

The proposed framework is key to building a strong forest economy in Ontario and is needed to create opportunities that would generate the right level of investment to ensure that crown forests continue to be renewed and enhanced while creating additional opportunities for jobs and economic prosperity. I can speak specifically to this in my region. We have a number of biomass companies that are looking and getting into the biomass economy and are seeking access to wood and wood supply in order to generate new businesses and new employment in the region. Unfortunately, under our existing tenure program, it is more difficult for new entrants to get access to wood. Of course, Ontario crown forests belong to the people of Ontario, and we want to make sure that Ontarians receive the full benefits of these resources.

The current forest tenure system was designed years ago to give primary consuming mills responsibility to manage Ontario's forests in exchange for long-term wood supply, making it difficult, as I said, for new players to enter the market and leaving communities vulnerable during economic downturns.

1350

Over my eight years in office, I've had a number of individuals, small companies and new companies come to me, looking for access to a wood supply. In fact, given our tenure system today, I've had to direct them to existing companies to try to access their wood as it has been given to them on a long-term wood supply tenure. What we're doing today will change that a bit, allow for new entrants to have easier access to wood and develop the companies as they would.

During our consultations, we heard loudly and clearly that Ontarians wanted change. However, we also heard that the change they wanted was to be implemented in a measured and cautious manner, and I believe that this legislation does just that. We listened. The member for Trinity–Spadina: We listened and we heard what they had to say, and we have, as such, responded to that

through this legislation. We've listened to the feedback. We've developed a proposed tenure model that is widely supported and contains many of the suggestions we heard during consultations, including more involvement by local and aboriginal communities.

There is no doubt that we face a daunting challenge in trying to revitalize this sector of the economy and our communities, to restore them to prosperity through a new forest economy based on new products, new markets and new processes. We are going to continue to work with the industry, as we have throughout this process, work with our local communities and work with the aboriginal communities and our partner ministries to ensure that the forest sector needs are addressed in a competent and timely manner. Together, we can work to revitalize our industry and our communities and restore prosperity.

There's a great deal of demand for these changes. These changes are needed in order to modernize the entire forestry sector. This is the right time to do it, as we are going through a transformation in the sector already. This will assist new entrants to get access to wood to be able to develop that employment that we so desperately need in the north, to actually revitalize an economy that has been hit by the downturn in the forestry sector and by the global economic downturn. We need to rebuild that industry. We need to assist those new entrepreneurs in coming up with new ideas, building new companies and hiring more folks up north.

As a proud northerner, I'm very pleased to support this legislation. I know it's very important for my community, for our region, and I look forward to hearing from other members of the Legislature on this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the minister from Nipissing: She only took five minutes. I don't get it. There's so much to say.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I know, but I wanted to hear from you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, you will as we go around—not that I am an expert, I have to admit straightaway. But I suspect you support this bill going through a committee process, making sure a whole lot of people in your part of the world and north of you are going to get a chance to come and speak to this bill. I'm assuming you're fine with that, because we're going to be pushing for that, obviously, because we want to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It would work if you spoke through the Chair.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Of course, Speaker; you're quite right. We want to hear from a whole lot of people, because I haven't been hearing a whole lot of opposition to the current system. If there is opposition to the current system and they want to revamp it because they believe that clearly we've got to make some changes, we need to know.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Haliburton–Victoria—

Mr. Rick Johnson: Kawartha Lakes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): — Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Thank you.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I am pleased that our government is proposing to modernize Ontario's tenure and pricing system so that we can put Ontario's wood back to work and continue to build a new forest economy. The proposed framework is key to building a strong forest economy in Ontario and is needed to create opportunities that would generate the right level of investment to ensure that our crown forests continue to be renewed and enhanced while creating additional opportunities for jobs and economic prosperity.

In my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, there are many areas in the north up near Algonquin park where there has been great discussion. Several members of the forest industry in that area were down to speak with the minister on this issue, and we're very pleased with being able to have that dialogue.

We have listened to the feedback and have developed a proposed tenure model that was widely supported and contains many of the suggestions we heard during the consultations, including more involvement by local and aboriginal communities. In my area in particular, the loggers are very used to working with the local cottagers' association, so they've been working on having a good community relationship.

There's no doubt we face some daunting challenges as we move forward, but I believe we can revitalize our industry and our communities by restoring prosperity through a new forest economy based on new products, new markets and new processes. We will continue to work with industry, local and aboriginal communities and our partner ministries to ensure that the forest sector's needs are addressed in a competent and timely manner. Together, we can work to revitalize our industry and our communities and restore prosperity. Together, the wood supply competition and tenure modernizations are key initiatives in promoting the fullest and most innovative use of Ontario's wood.

I know that as we move forward there will still undoubtedly be challenges, but that's part of the process in working forward to making sure that we resolve this, and our government has clearly shown that we have an open process to getting this done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talked about that there will be challenges going forward. I guess you got that right. There are going to be huge challenges going forward, and this legislation isn't going to help it at all.

These local LHINs that you're going to be developing are just going to be an absolute nightmare. You're going to put local people on a council to make economic decisions about who wins and who loses. That's just a formula that is tantamount to a disaster.

People in the north, of course, were looking forward to getting some stability. They've had 60 or 90 mills that have shut down in the north. This bill could be described

as being somewhat of a diversion. Here we have a new bill going through the House and people have great hopes for it but, unfortunately, what you're going to end up with is that the mills are going to remain closed because this bill doesn't address any of the issues that caused the mills to be closed, and going forward is going to be just one disaster after another. I think you've compounded the problems in the north by introducing this bill and muddying the waters by not giving any security of wood.

Producing wood is a lot like producing apples. It takes a long time to grow a tree; it takes a very long time to grow a tree. Managing that growth and managing the availability of that tree is very much an issue that the industry lives or dies by. The way in which this bill restructures the forest industry in the north is going to make that a much more difficult task to manage, and I don't think that will be a good thing for northern Ontario or, indeed, any part of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I just wanted to compliment my friend and colleague from Nipissing on her fine analysis of the bill during her presentation.

I think we should all recognize what this bill does. This bill provides an opportunity for local corporations—more local than there are today—to make decisions around the allocation of wood. Now, I don't know about other people with large northern constituencies and large northern forests, but I know that one of the complaints I've had for the 20-some years that I have represented Algoma–Manitoulin in the Legislature is the fact that small and sometimes medium-sized forest companies who need access to lumber, to timber, to the resource, have had great difficulty doing that through the process we have today.

We believe that a process that allows for the best—and by "best" I mean generates the most money for the crown, generates the most money for the people who use the timber—can go forward. It seems to me that if you believe in markets, a system of market-priced wood is probably a better price than kind of going back to—well, I sometimes say to my friends that if you thought Stalin had it right, you'd like the five-year plans we have today. That is not what I think is in the interests of people. We believe that the marketplace should set the price. We believe that competitive prices, a competitive forest, will produce the best for communities, will produce the best revenues for the province of Ontario and will produce the greatest economy.

1400

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Government House leader, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to thank the members from Trinity–Spadina, Algoma–Manitoulin and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—and the member from Halton for sharing that insight that it takes a long time for a tree to grow. I'd like to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina for his input and assure him that we will, of course, be going to committee, as we do with all of our legislation—unlike previous governments who usurped that little part of the process. We will be going to committee, as we always do, and we look forward to more input from you, the member for Trinity–Spadina, at the committee stage.

I would dispute what the member for Halton had to say and, of course, agree with my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin, who, having a number of mills and forestry undertakings in his riding, would know best that this legislation will modernize Ontario's forest tenure and pricing system.

Our modernization of Ontario's forest tenure and pricing system will help make Ontario's timber supply and prices more responsive to market demand and create new business opportunities, because it will actually allow access to lumber where that's not possible today. The member from Halton would know that if he had actually been north of Barrie and understood a little bit more about the forestry sector. It will also create new business opportunities for entrepreneurs and facilitate greater local, community and aboriginal participation in the sector—all of which has been called for from across the north, all of which is here, present, in this legislation. I think this legislation will take our forestry industry in the right direction and will help it to re-establish itself as a world leader in the forest market.

I appreciate the opportunity today to have some time, as a proud northerner, to speak about this important industry and to speak about this important piece of legislation that our government is putting forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 151, An Act to enact the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011 and to amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act.

This is a poor response to the concern that has been registered on behalf of forestry operators with respect to the tenure system and its problems here in the province of Ontario. What they've come up with, unfortunately, is not something that is going to help the forestry sector. First of all, notwithstanding the government House leader and member for Nipissing talking about how important the government considers this bill to be, are they committed to actually passing this bill before this House prorogues in the spring session?

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, we'll see about that, because they're going to have to have committee hearings outside of Toronto. You're not going to have a bill that affects other areas of the province as greatly as this does and not have that committee travel extensively to ensure that the people who are most directly affected and the companies that are most directly affected have an opportunity to speak to the bill, and its effects and implication as well. We don't need this drafted-in-Toronto piece of legislation, then to ignore, as this government is wont to do on so many occasions, the input from other areas of the province.

It's been increasingly the pattern of this government to want to pass legislation without having those committees travel to the areas that are most directly affected. I would hope that this government is going to change the way it's been doing business as of late and ensure—I know my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa, our deputy leader, is nodding her head. She has seen bills that she's had a great interest in as well in this House where, all of a sudden, "No, we're not going anywhere with the committee. We're going to make sure that Toronto designs and does all the committee work on the legislation as well." We want to make sure at the outset that this bill doesn't get given short shrift when it comes to making sure that those people who are most affected by it have input.

The Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry actually came to my riding when they were talking about these changes in the tenure for forestry operators. Most people that I talked to have said they haven't got it right; they're responding to some of the problems, but they haven't got it right. It seems this is more about putting forth a bill that says, "We're doing something." As I say, notwithstanding, we'll see. We'll see, when the House rises, whether or not they've actually passed this bill through third reading in the House and it has been given royal assent, because I have my doubts that they're actually going to proceed. I've been wrong before. I'll give them the opportunity to prove me wrong on this one.

Some of the concerns that have been put forth about this bill—I'm going to get to them shortly, but first I want to talk about the sector in general. The government implies that somehow this is going to be the panacea, this is going to be the bill, the game-changer, for forestry operators, lumber producers and logging operators in this province. They're somehow implying that this 15-page document—and that's in both official languages, so we would say "this seven-and-a-half-page document"—is somehow going to be the genesis for a new age in forestry in the province of Ontario. Well, this is one that I am quite certain I won't be wrong on: This is not the answer.

When you talk to forestry operators—and I probably have more mills in my riding than perhaps in any riding in the province. They're smaller mills, they're not the giants, but they continue to operate. I'm so proud of the fact that most of those mills have been run by families, some into the fifth generation, and they continue to operate through the good times and through the tough times, because their heart and soul are in those operations and they care about the people they employ. I'm talking about the Shaws, the Murrays, the McRaes, the Neumans. We're talking about the people who have been operating mills in my riding for 100 years and more. So they have the commitment. That's what has kept them working, and kept people working, through all of these difficult times.

When you ask them why mills are closing, they'll talk about energy costs. They'll talk about regulatory burdens that this government just loves to foist upon the people. It was interesting: a couple of weeks ago, my colleague from Oxford, Ernie—oh, I can't use his name. But you know who he is, Mr. Speaker; you know him well. He talked about how this government has this study and this plan where, if they have something that has three regulations now where they say you have to fill out this part of the form and this part of the form and this part of the form, they're now going to have part of the regulations say, "Just fill out the form," and they're going to say that they've actually removed two thirds of the regulatory burden. That's the kind of—I don't want to say "deceitful," because that would be unparliamentary, but I can't think of another word—the way that they go about gaming the people in saying that they're reducing the regulatory burden, when in fact these guys love regulatory burdens. That's what they thrive on; it's their lifeblood. Regulatory burden is what makes the Liberals tick.

1410

So now what we've got is a new piece of legislation that essentially creates another bureaucracy. When you talk to those companies that are struggling, they talk about regulatory burden; then they talk about energy prices. Our forestry sector is struggling because it can't make a profit, and the reason is that expenses are high, driven by high energy costs and driven by regulatory burden, and revenues are low because of markets.

It's interesting what part they're doing in the bill. They want to put 25% of the new tenure program and the management areas up for bid, or the lots or whatever you want to call them. On the outset, you might say, "Well, that's a good thing." But it doesn't exclude a company from Quebec, for example, from coming in and bidding on that wood.

Are they so naive to believe that people wouldn't manipulate a market in order to benefit themselves? Whether it was an American corporation or a Quebec corporation, for example, they could bid high, thereby messing up the entire market for that wood but denying that wood from the Ontario operator. If they're that naive to believe that manipulation of the market doesn't go on, they obviously weren't around in the Enron years or the collapse of 2008 with the sub-prime mortgages etc. If someone believes that they can profit from a manipulated market, they're giving them, in this bill, all the incentive to do just that.

The other thing is the access to the wood. While there is concern on the part of small operators about big operators having access to all this wood, when you as a government have not given a single operator a single reason to have confidence in this province and cultivate a willingness to invest in it, because of the way you've treated the forestry sector—when you take away the guaranteed access to that wood, what incentive is there on the part of that company to make that kind of investment here in the province of Ontario? That's a fair question. It is not being answered by this bill, and it is not being answered by the minister. Business operates

because it can operate at a profit. If it cannot operate at a profit, it will not be long for this world. That's a simple fact.

If we're going to deny the companies certainty—this is what we hear so much today: "We need certainty." The only certain thing from this government is uncertainty. That's what people continue to get in the messaging from this government. They're asking for certainty.

The other thing I want to talk about is that if this government really cared about the forestry industry—I haven't stopped, Speaker; I'm just having a drink. Perhaps I can get a couple more of these waters, too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As long as you don't sit down, you're okay.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There you go.

The folks over there are saying, "Go ahead, Yak. Stand and just be quiet."

If you really cared about this business and this industry, why wouldn't you have done something—I'm not suggesting for a moment that electricity from biomass is the answer alone for the industry, because it's not. It's not because your stock-in-trade has to be your prime products. If you're in the lumber business, then lumber has to be your main product. But we have to be able to do it competitively. All the regulations and the additional costs that they have foisted on this industry through their Endangered Species Act and other pieces of legislation have driven up the cost of doing business, and then their Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity for all of these operators as well.

So you're willing to pay up to 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour for solar power, and the poster child—Mr. Speaker, I love this one because it should grate everybody on the other side of the House—is IKEA, a company that made a €2.5-billion profit in 2009—€2.5-billion profit in 2009. This government signs a contract with them to produce electricity on the roofs of their warehouse and is going to pay them almost 71 cents a kilowatt hour.

I don't see those lumber companies in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I don't see the forest operators in northern Ontario talking about a €2.5-billion profit. So what's the government doing for them? You'd think that maybe they could have said, "You know what? In our Green Energy Act we're going to ensure a fair rate." A fair rate, not an excessive rate. Nobody is asking for that, but just a fair rate that is respective and recognizes the cost that you have for power from biomass.

This government is so fixated on their wind turbines and solar panels that they have no time for those folks who maybe—as I said, Mr. Speaker, power from biomass is not going to be the core of their business, but for one that is on either side of that wedge where you're going to be successful this year, you're going to make a profit, or you're going to go down the tubes, that little extra might be the game-changer, might just be that little extra bit of help that some of those businesses could have used, or can use, to ensure that they'll be around, that they'll actually be around if and when the market is conducive to producing more of the products that they do so well at.

We've got the best lumber in the world. We produce the best lumber in the world. We have to have markets to sell it to, both domestically and foreign. We need to see some things happening. The housing starts in the United States are a key driver of our business. That is something that they've been anticipating is going to improve, and it has yet to come through to fruition. We have to be ready to pounce on that opportunity when it presents itself, but if our operators are already closed, how many mills—I can't ask Rosie; he might not know. But if Howard was here, he'd have the number.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He'd know.

Mr. John Yakabuski: About 60 mills, I believe, in northern Ontario have closed. Is it 62, Mike? Tell me how many, Mike. Shout it out, Mike. Shout it out. How many mills have closed in northern Ontario under the McGuinty government? It's about 60 or so.

If and when there's a change in the marketplace, we are not going to be in a position to take full advantage of those opportunities if, through government regulation, through government stifling, through government decisions that drive up the cost of electricity, we've driven so many of these people out of business. We need to be cognizant of that.

Could they not have had in their Green Energy Act, by which they've squandered billions—it's billions again, Mr. Speaker—in enriching so many operators of renewable projects, something that would have said to our forestry sector, "We care about you, too. We recognize that you're going through some of the most difficult times in your history, and we're going to have a rate that respects the fact that you don't just put something up and wait until the wind whips by"?

1420

No. You've got to get out to that bush. You've got to determine which trees are going to be harvested. Those trees have to be harvested, so there's your procurement. Then they've got to be trucked to the mill, and they've got to be processed. What is left is the residual, which has to be reprocessed and transported to an energy-producing facility and reduced to a form that can be consumed by the furnaces, and then you get electricity from it. It's not just whipping by. There is a significant cost involved.

If this government truly cared about the forest industry, if the Minister of Energy and the Premier truly cared, they would have had a rate that respected the needs of that industry.

I can't believe that I'm just about out of time.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Could I get more?

Anyway, I have to say that I'm going to be voting against this bill. I don't think it's the answer. The answer lies somewhere else. Perhaps after October 6, we can take another look at this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There are a couple of things I wanted to make reference to, and also say that I agree in

part with what the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said.

One of them, of course, is to make sure we get enough hearings so that people in the north could be heard. We think that's critical. The second thing is that the reason why many mills have closed over many years is because hydro rates were incredibly high. The member said that, and I take that information from our former leader from Kenora–Rainy River, who used to say that day in and day out in this Legislature—day in and day out. It took him a long time to be heard by the Liberals.

He was saying, "Unless we deal with energy rates, more mills are going to keep closing," as they did. Why? Because it's cheaper to run these mills in Quebec—next door. It's cheaper to run them in Manitoba—next door. The rates are incredibly cheaper on either side of our borders. He often said, "Unless we deal with this, they're going to take off to other jurisdictions," as they did, "because we're not dealing with the energy costs."

I'm not convinced that it has to do with regulatory burdens, as you say, member for Renfrew, at least not based on what I heard from the member from Kenora–Rainy River. You might be right, but I haven't heard it. The issue of pricing, the issue of electricity rates, is something we have got to deal with. We still haven't dealt with it, and until we do, we're going to face the same problems.

Does this bill solve some of those questions? It doesn't. The member from Kenora–Rainy River used to say that we produce so much energy, and yet it costs us so much in the north to be able to offer affordable prices and remain competitive—and we never got a hearing. I'll speak more about it in a few minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm pleased to comment on my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's speech. He represents an important forestry constituency, not so much based on the crown forests, but somewhat. He obviously is interested in events in Algonquin forestry in particular.

But the Crown Forest Sustainability Act really deals with the large crown forests mostly across the northern part of Ontario, which provide huge employment opportunities and a good part of our GDP and jobs in northern Ontario. We have experienced, as he has pointed out, a market downturn in demand and in price across North America and, dare I say, the world. It has affected northern Ontario in ways that I think people in southern Ontario can't fully appreciate.

I represent a lot of the communities which do have mills that need to get up and running again. The government has taken significant steps to make these communities viable again. They've done that by—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I heard electricity mentioned. We do have biomass projects going in the constituency and being proposed. We do have opportunities in solar energy across the constituency that are going forward. They are making us more competitive. This is just one more piece of the puzzle.

The tenure changes will not fix the world but they will move us along that route. I would urge the member to come to committee and take the opportunity to provide us with some thoughts. I heard him talk about the competitive structure, and making sure the competitive bids were really competitive bids. I look forward to his interventions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It is a pleasure to rise today and make some comments in regard to Bill 151. I think our member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke did a good outline of the issues surrounding small lumber and timber producers and the mills that are in his riding and adjacent northern ridings. I think it's important, as he outlined—the lack of profits, the issues that they're facing every day in their day-to-day trying to do business.

One of the other members spoke about the Open Ontario issue. I think it's more like another nail in the coffin of the small businesses and the mills that are in the north, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke just outlined. He said that they need a fair rate of return for the power that they produce from biomass. They certainly need to have that initiated and taken into account.

Also, as he outlined, they need the opportunity, and these hearings should be held throughout the north close to the people most affected—not the people north of Bloor Street or north of St. Clair but people north of number 6; anyway, the people that actually live in the north that will be affected by this.

He mentioned a number of families that have been in these lumber mills and in the power-producing business in the north for a number of years, generations in fact, and they need the opportunity to be able to respond, and not have to travel down to Toronto, where they would have to hire a consultant or a lobbyist to speak for them, but to actually have these hearings in the north, in their homes, in their communities, where they can actually visit their employees, the people who make a living there and the people who exist in ancillary-type industries that also depend on these mills. It's probably a one-industry town in a lot of cases.

The member spoke about a number as high as possibly 60 mills that either have closed or threatened to close. A lot of it is because of high energy costs, regulations, re-regulations and excessive paperwork that a number of these industries have to do.

I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: No one knows as well as our northern caucus members—myself obviously being one of them, and my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin—all of us, about the challenges that have faced the forestry sector over the last five, six, seven years, and the measures that our government has taken to respond to those challenges.

We have made available to the industry up to $1 billion in incentives, much of which has been accessed, such as the uploading of the road maintenance fund, something that indeed the New Democrats actually downloaded to the companies back during when they were in power. A wrong move, we believe.

But also one needs to deal with the reality of some of those challenges, such as energy, like the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke spoke about, which is why we put in place a northern electricity transition program, and an industrial conservation initiative, as well as reducing costs—a number of things that have reduced costs to the forestry sector by a significant amount, and now we've extended it to the mining sector as well and to the northern steel sector.

May I also say that the fact that the dollar was at 62 or 63 cents against the American dollar about seven years ago and the fact that obviously markets have changed have added to those challenges. It's on that basis that we've moved forward on a couple of things, one of them, more specifically, being this legislation: the forest tenure modernization legislation, which, may I say, members of all sides of this House have been saying we should be doing for some time, particularly the New Democrats, who recognize that this has to look at a new modernized system, one that we have consulted on extensively in two different fashions already with not just northerners but all those in the forestry sector, about a way to look at us making more opportunities there in a more market-based way, plus looking at our local forest management corporations, made up of aboriginal and regional municipality leadership, as well as directors on those boards.

We think this legislation is a very important positive step forward. We look forward to it going to committee and we look forward to further debate on this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have up to two minutes to respond.

1430

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from Trinity–Spadina, Algoma–Manitoulin, Sarnia–Lambton, and the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

The minister and the member from Algoma–Manitoulin talked about the things that the government has done to move in the right direction. At the rate they're going, one would have to live as long as Methuselah to see them fix this mess that they've been so much a part of creating in northern Ontario, and I don't think any of us have that in the cards.

I think the minister is well-intentioned here, but part of the problem—and this is the way Liberals do things: They create corporations and bureaucracy in order to try to solve a problem. Just read the explanatory note, paragraph 3: "Each Ontario local forest management corporation shall consist of its members who are appointed"—more Liberal appointments—"by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and who form the board of directors of the corporation. The Lieutenant Governor in Council must designate one member as chair of the board and at least one member as vice-chair of the board."

It sure sounds like bureaucracy to me, and that's what you get. When the Liberals think they're going to try to solve a problem, they just create another bureaucracy. That's not what the people in the industry need. They need real, concrete action to address the problems that they're facing so that they can again lead in a competitive marketplace, but in a fair marketplace, where the rules that they work under are somewhat equal to the rules that others work under, and the costs that they have to operate under are somewhat equal to the costs that others have to operate under. Until we reach that kind of equilibrium, our forestry sector is going to struggle, and this government has done little to change that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is a pleasure to speak to this bill. I happen to be one of those members who used to live south of Bloor Street most of my life, to the member from Sarnia–Lambton. I moved to Lawrence and Bathurst about eight years ago and I thought, "How am I ever going to live it through? Can I live anywhere north of Bloor?" I survived; I've got to admit, I survived. It is unbelievable. Could I move further away from the Lawrence and Bathurst area? I've got to tell you, I'm not sure I could. Finding a nice espresso north of Bloor is tough. I'm sure there are a couple of good espresso bars in the Woodbridge area—I'm sure—but I don't know; I don't want to go find them.

I admit I don't know much about forestry; I don't. I want to say that to the minister and to the member from Manitoulin. But I take guidance from my two colleagues from Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay. These two members are knowledgeable on northern issues, and I listen to what they have to say.

One of the rules that I apply to these bills is: Who's glad, who's sad and who's mad? I've got to tell you, I don't think there are too many people who are glad about this bill. I know the member from Manitoulin says that he's glad, I know the minister says that he's glad, and I know that they both say that they know people who are glad that they're making these changes to the forestry sector, but I haven't heard that many people tell us it's time for a change in terms of what we are doing so far; I haven't.

What I know is that a whole lot of people are mad about what's about to happen, and a whole lot of people are sad because they are not seeing, unlike the member from Algoma–Manitoulin and the minister, the positive effects of this bill.

I want to speak to a couple of these changes. Again, I take guidance from my colleague and friend from Kenora–Rainy River. What this bill does—and the member from Nipissing spoke to it; the member from Algoma–Manitoulin spoke to it. They're quite happy that they're going to go to market bidding. They're going to open up our forestry, and by the way, 90% of our forestry is controlled by the province. It's controlled by the public. Only about 10% is in private hands.

So we are going to go to a market bidding system, where anybody can apply to get into the field. The member from Kenora–Rainy River said, "Who do you think is going to win those contracts?" It's not going to be Ontario firms. It's going to be the firms from a couple of places: Minnesota, because they've got some bucks; they've got a whole lot of mills themselves out there. The rates are cheaper. We're going to get Quebec to bid on our wood chips. We're going to get Manitoba to bid. Why? Because they can, because they have much of it and because they're quite willing to bid higher than what most firms in Ontario can because they do it more cheaply. This is a bonanza for them.

The member from Manitoulin speaks quite proudly of the fact that we're opening up our markets, but you're opening up the markets to whom? It's not going to be Ontario firms; it's going to be out-of-province—and God bless. I love Quebec; I do. I love Manitoba. I have less love for the American jurisdictions; I've got to admit that. But these are the people who are going to come and do it more cheaply.

In the end, my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River argues, "Who will benefit from allowing outsiders, both within Canada and outside of Canada, to come and bid on these in the forestry sector?" We're going to get a couple of jobs cutting the timber here, but the rest of it is going to leave this province; may leave the country and go to other jurisdictions where other workers will have the benefit of Canadian timber, of publicly-owned Canadian timber. All the well-paying jobs will leave this province. It ought to be obvious to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin that they will be able to bid, and bid high, to get the contracts because, as I argued earlier, producing the product in Manitoba or Quebec or Minnesota is a lot cheaper, because their electricity rates have been cheaper for a long, long time. It's just a basic function—as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said—of affordability: Can we afford to produce the product here at the rates that we pay? For a long time, my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River said, "We can."

They're leaving. They're leaving; our mills are closing down, shutting down because they can't afford to stay. It took the minister a long, long time to respond to the member from Kenora–Rainy River, and then he says, "We lowered the rates. We lowered the electricity rates." It took him a long, long time to listen. By that time, all the mills had shut down, gone away for good. Now they're hoping that because they're open for business and because of the market bidding process, things will turn around. No, they're not going to turn around for Ontarians. They're going to turn around for other provinces. That is one of the single biggest problemos identified by the member from Kenora–Rainy River, and I, my friends, believe him over my Liberal colleagues, in spite of what they may say and/or think.

The other little problemo identified by my colleague from Timmins–James Bay is that the bill will allow a licensee to surrender—will allow—a forest resource licence subject to terms and conditions set out by the minister and permit the imposing of terms and conditions by the minister in respect to a transfer of a forest resource licence.

My colleague said the following—as a social democrat, because under different circumstances we would be happy to be able to control it as a government and say, "You're not doing the right things. We're going to take that licence away from you." But my colleague from Timmins–James Bay said that our firms need to know and understand what the rules are. If the rules are not clear, they're not likely to invest. And if you're about to pull the licence from somebody on a given whim of a minister, depending on who's in power at the moment, and they can take your licence away without any sense of what guidelines there might be with respect to it, they may or may not invest. They need the security of knowing that if they're there for 20 years, they're going to have that security. And assuming that they've been working under the rule of law, why wouldn't we allow that to continue? We're about to take that security away with a measure introduced by this bill. How does this help? I don't know. That's what is not clear to me.

1440

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin is quite happy with this. He smiles as I speak about these things. God bless him; he must know something I don't know. We're going to go to committee hearings and hear from your friends, those who might be glad—I don't know who they are—and speak to these two issues that have been raised by my colleagues.

What my friend from Timmins–James Bay identified in his hour-long speech is that he is saying that prices are going to go up. This new system that you're putting into place permits, will allow—it doesn't say with any certainty, but it appears to be certain—that prices of wood particles, wood fibre, are going to jump up. The minister, Manitoulin: It may or may not be so, you argue. Other people fear the prices are likely to go up. This is something that we should be worried about, that we should be afraid of.

So the question is, what is wrong with our current rules that we need to change the law and bring so much uncertainty into the field, including bringing foreigners who will bid, establish themselves here, cart out the wood and bring it to other jurisdictions, and give all the good, high-value-added jobs to other jurisdictions?

This doesn't look too good to me, my friends. I'm happy to go to the hearings.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for Trinity–Spadina for his great engagement in this debate. It certainly is an important one. It's one that we think we want to be able to have more people like him involved in, to understand better why this legislation will indeed make a very positive difference in terms of how the forest sector is able to operate.

The truth is, we've been operating for some time in a situation where significant millions of cubic metres of

our crown wood have not been harvested, for a variety of different reasons. We want to make sure, for example, in this legislation that we set up a scenario whereby what has happened in the past—and it's a term I don't like to use often, but whereas wood has been hoarded by those people who presently hold sustainable forest licences, we will be certainly in a position where that won't be happening in the future. That's why we want to basically open it up to a more market-based system that we think will actually make it work and make it more competitive, as my friend from Algoma–Manitoulin pointed out. It means that costs will then actually get reduced, in terms of the competitive marketplace.

The truth is also that I find it somewhat passing strange that the members of the third party are opposing us testing the principles of this model by having more regional and aboriginal involvement in terms of members of a local forest management corporation. We recognize this process is going to take some time, between five and seven years. We'll have the enhanced shareholder sustainable forest licence model, but we also think that by testing the principles of our modernized proposal through these local forest management corporations—we hope to have one, maybe two; I think it's important we want to do that—we believe it'll give us a real opportunity to see how the system can work.

Again, from a party that certainly in the past has supported better usage of our crown fibre, recognizing that there has previously been a situation where there has been a hoarding or a holding on to our crown fibre that's not being used, we want to change that system. That's partly why we have the wood supply competition out there, very successfully, and also why we want to move forward on our modernized tenure proposal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to use a term that is used by my good friend the member from Trinity–Spadina, who says often, "Who's mad, who's glad and who's sad?" Because when it comes to this legislation, I can tell you that there are a whole bunch of people who are mad. They went in good faith and consulted with your ministry in regard to looking at what could be done in order to better reflect what needs to happen in northern Ontario when it comes to wood tenure reform. They look at this final product, and at the end of the day they don't see what they talked about in this legislation. That is coming from all parts of northern Ontario.

I was home on the weekend, as you were, Minister, back in your home constituency of Thunder Bay–Superior North, I believe, and there are a whole bunch of people who are unhappy. I know because I spoke to some of the communities and some of the operators in your own riding, who were talking to me about what this means to them and what the wood tenure supply process that we just went through meant to their communities.

Who's mad? I think there are a lot of people who are mad. They're mad because they engaged in a process that they thought, in the end, was going to give them a real say about the end product that we brought to the House this spring.

Who's sad? I think there are a lot of workers, a lot of companies and a lot of municipalities out there that are sad, who are saying that at the end of the day, this is going to do nothing to raise more money for the forest industry to do the investments they've got to do, because it fundamentally attacks the security of tenure for those who have tenure now and doesn't adequately deal with the issues on the opposite side of the issue that people want dealt with.

Who's glad? I guess there's a Liberal caucus that's glad, and maybe some other people whom you're talking to.

I've got to say that in the test of my good friend Rosario Marchese from Trinity–Spadina, this does not meet the test.

At the end of the day, we understand, in northern Ontario, that wood supply is vital to the survival of our communities. This particular legislation is putting that at risk, and I think we're going to hear more about that if this bill does actually go out to committee over the next little while.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm always interested in the remarks by my friend from Trinity–Spadina.

I want to share and associate myself with the view of the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry when he suggests a fact. A fact is, we have millions of cubic metres of wood, timber and fibre doing absolutely nothing in the northern crown forests—nothing. They're providing no employment, no opportunities and no benefits to the communities that surround them—none. So if he's suggesting that the status quo is where we should be, I reject that; the government rejects that.

We believe that our moving forward on a revised tenure proposal in a measured way—this is a measured way. We are going to test it in two particular local forest management companies—two. So we're not mad. We're doing this in a measured way.

We hope to put that fibre to work for the people who live and work in northern communities and provide benefit to the people who own the forests, which is all of us here in Ontario but particularly those in northern communities.

I think that as we go forward with this, people will understand that a competitive price is not a bad thing and that companies are used to doing that; companies in the real world do that all the time. We need to understand that our competitors do that, and we need to be able to do that in order to be profitable and prosperous.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Let me just say that I'm encouraged about one thing. For a while, government members were trying to deny that crown wood was going to be put up for bid and that the highest bidder would get

the wood. I think what we're finally hearing now—and I would credit my colleague from Trinity–Spadina for doing this—is that government members are actually starting to admit that crown wood would be put up for bid.

I hope the next thing we can get them to admit is that once you take crown wood and you put it up for bid, you are then captured by the terms of NAFTA and the WTO, and if a company based in Minnesota bids on the wood and they have the highest bid, they get the wood. If a company in Michigan bids on Ontario wood and they have the highest bid, they get the wood. If that means Ontario wood fibre leaves Ontario and Ontario mills shut down while the wood fibre is used to produce good jobs in Michigan or Wisconsin or Minnesota or New York state, there's nothing Ontario can then do about it. You are under the terms of NAFTA and the World Trade Organization. It's only by extension that if a company in Manitoba bids on the wood in northwestern Ontario and gets it, you're going to be hard-pressed to say they can't have it. If companies in Quebec along the Quebec–Ontario border bid on the wood and they have the highest bid, you're going to be hard-pressed to say to them, "You can't have it." What it means is, Ontario wood fibre will not be generating good jobs in Ontario anymore; it'll be generating good jobs elsewhere. New Democrats stand against anything that results in Ontario resources being used to generate good jobs elsewhere—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina, you have up to two minutes to respond.

1400

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to thank all my good friends, including my Liberal friends.

What my two colleagues have raised are serious concerns. We are potentially putting a great deal at risk. If they are right and you are wrong and you proceed in this way, we could potentially hurt a whole lot of our workers in northern Ontario and put at risk a lot of our companies that deal with timber. I'm not sure we want to take that chance—not based on what you're producing here.

I want to say that you might be doing this with good intentions; it's quite possible. But if indeed you are wrong, this is a huge problemo that we are dealing with, because you could be leaving a terrible, terrible legacy that you wouldn't want to attach your name to.

The good thing is that we're going to have hearings. The House leader indicated that this is going to be the case. You're all going to be happy to take this bill out, and this is good, because we want to hear, as the member from Nipissing said, what people have to say. If, on that basis, we hear that a whole lot of people—not just workers, but companies—have the concerns that my colleagues from Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay have raised, I am hoping that you're just going to back down and do the right thing: Either drop the bill altogether or redo it or simply wait until the next election and see what happens.

That is what I am hoping will happen because, I have to admit, after hearing the arguments, I do not see a positive side of Bill 151 on our own companies, on our own workers and on our own ability as Ontarians to exploit the resources in a general and positive way for all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm privileged this afternoon to have the opportunity to get a few remarks on record regarding Bill 151. But first of all, on behalf of my wife, Karen, and myself, I just want to thank all members in this House for the wonderful reception that my son, Braden, received during the three weeks he was a page here. He learned a lot from all members of the House, and chatting about it he had the opportunity to certainly appreciate what goes on here at the Ontario Legislature each and every day. Mr. Prue—I forget his riding, but he particularly liked—

Mr. Michael Prue: Beaches–East York.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes, Beaches–East York—treated my son to the famous candy that he has in his office, and I want to thank the graciousness of the member from Beaches–East York in doing that.

It goes without saying that certainly the forestry industry in the province of Ontario has gone through a significant upheaval in the last four or five years. I have taken the opportunity to read a number of publications. One of the things they talk about, of course, is the exchange rate. We went from a situation for forest products that were harvested here in Ontario, manufactured into other products here in the province of Ontario—indeed, they enjoyed, for a significant period of time, a 40% to 45% discount going into the largest market that our forestry industries were working with, that being the United States. As the dollar started to appreciate, that advantage was lost and put significant pressures on Ontario's forestry sector in terms of competitiveness. But that was an impact that was also felt by the forestry industry in the provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba and, indeed, Quebec.

The other thing that put real pressure, particularly on the pulp and paper side of the forestry industry in the province of Ontario, was the situation of technology. More and more people in today's society get their news via the Internet and through other technological opportunities, and that has significantly decreased the demand for paper in the forestry sector. We witnessed some of the largest newspapers in North America cease publication because they lost their market, because people are going to electronic means to get their news. That's just the reality that the North American forestry industry was facing.

When you look at players in the forestry industry south of the border, in places like North Carolina and South Carolina, where trees grow faster, there has also been a significant shutdown of companies in those areas and a real rationalization of the industry in total.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: One hundred and ninety thousand forestry workers.

Mr. Jeff Leal: In the United States alone, there has been a displacement of 190,000 forestry workers, which is hugely significant, and which has a tremendous impact on their respective communities.

It's also interesting that there is some debate today about whether this bill would not withstand a WTO or NAFTA challenge. Well, it's interesting: Another impact that happened on Ontario's forestry industry was the long-running softwood lumber dispute. We have always put forward the position that, indeed, our stumpage fees were very legitimate and would stand up to any trade challenge, and that has consistently been Ontario's and Canada's position. But south of the border, they will file anything when it comes to potential subsidies. The Americans enjoy doing that.

Any initiatives that we've had here in Ontario and, indeed, Canada—a whole wide range of them have been challenged over the last number of years under the WTO and NAFTA, even though we have said consistently that our policies, in terms of stumpage fees and other policies that we have, would sustain WTO or NAFTA challenges.

The other thing that has some concern—and I've been listening carefully to my seatmate here, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, and indeed the minister from Thunder Bay–Superior North. The fact of the matter is, we have some significant tracts in northern Ontario that have been tied up by one entity for a period of time. They haven't been harvested. That resource is there. It is not generating any particular wealth for respective communities in that particular area. So it is my understanding that this legislation would allow a bidding process to take place, an opportunity, whether it's an Ontario entity or an entity from Quebec or Manitoba or Minnesota, to actually come in, make a bid, acquire this crown forest and, indeed, have the opportunity to put it to use, as long as they, of course, have the opportunity to do some additional processing and manufacturing in the province of Ontario. That's the situation that I'm told exists today, and we'll allow it to go forward under Bill 151.

I also believe it's important that this bill, since it's not only important to the residents of northern Ontario but for all residents in the province of Ontario, goes to committee. We will hear individuals and companies with the opportunity to come forward to comment on this particular piece of legislation, and indeed take those comments that have been put forward and look at ways we might be able to amend the legislation to reflect some of the concerns that have been brought forward by individuals and communities that have a very legitimate stake in this bill.

1500

The Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011, would enable the modernization of Ontario's forest tenure processing system. Modernization of Ontario's forest tenure and pricing system would help make Ontario's timber supply prices more responsive to market demand, create new business opportunities for entrepreneurs and facilitate greater local community and aboriginal peoples' participation in the sector.

Close to my riding is the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. While I don't have a lot of forestry activity in Peterborough riding, I have been in Haliburton county on numerous occasions, and there is a fairly significant forestry industry located in Haliburton county. And I know that my colleague the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has certainly been involved.

I understand he has had representations on this issue to himself personally and that he facilitated a number of meetings between forestry interests in Haliburton county and brought them in to meet the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. I'm hoping that that member will take the opportunity to comment on this very important bill.

The Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011, would amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. It would enable incorporation of Ontario local forest management corporations as crown agents by regulation.

The act sets out the objectives of Ontario local forest management, including:

—holding forest resource licences and managing crowned forests in a sustainable manner, something that is of interest to every member of this House;

—providing economic development opportunities for aboriginal peoples;

—managing its affairs as a self-sustaining business entity and optimizing the value from crown forest resources; and

—marketing, selling and enabling access to a predictable and competitively priced supply of crown forest resources.

That is very important, because the business community likes certainty, and I believe this bill will provide some certainty to the forestry industry in northern Ontario and allow those companies that have a long history of participating in northern Ontario the opportunity to have some certainty, the opportunity to make investment decisions based on that certainty and renew the health of the forestry industry in northern Ontario, which is so vital.

It's a little like the car industry. I know that General Motors in Oshawa represents about 25% of the local economy in Peterborough riding. We were able to help General Motors through a difficult period. To compare the car industry in my riding, it's certainly the role that the forestry industry plays in northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member has obviously drunk the Kool-Aid on this bill.

I can't understand how this bill is going to help the forest industry in Ontario. The forest industry is something that it takes a long time to manage. It seems to me that this bill is going to allow for—it may not actually do it, but it certainly allows for—contracting that management time. Managing a piece of forest takes place over many, many years. You probably have a 40-, 50- or 60-year cycle of managing that forest. It takes that long for a

tree to grow. When you contract that, you end up with lots of lumber for a short period of time, but then you have a long drought while the forests regrow. Of course, no industry can withstand those long droughts.

Management of the forest over time is something Ontario has always done fairly well. Yes, there are people who say they haven't got access to wood. Well, maybe there's not enough wood to go around all the time. But if we make wood available in huge quantities over a five- or 10-year period, we're going to find that we have a huge shortage of timber down the line. I don't think that these committees that you're setting up to accomplish this management are going to have the same long-term outlook that the current system has. I'm not in love with the current system, but I don't think moving to this system is going to fix it. I think it's going to make the system a lot worse, and I think that could do irreparable damage to Ontario forests in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just amazed at what the government is trying to say in defence of this legislation; first of all, that we need this legislation to reallocate timber. Give me a break. You have that authority now, under the current law—

Mr. Howard Hampton: And they're using it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —and they're using it. Go talk to Wawa, go talk to Dubreuilville, go talk to Sioux Lookout, go talk to Attawapiskat, go talk to Smooth Rock Falls and 30 other communities: The wood is being reallocated. So don't come to me as a northerner and say that you need this to reallocate timber, because you currently have it.

You know what really, really miffs me as a northerner? Here we've got another example of a bunch of people in Toronto who are well intentioned, who think they're doing the right thing, and they're going to tell us how to do things in northern Ontario. That's what this thing comes down to.

I'll tell you, we are getting more and more upset as we watch this government go forward, because they're taking this to the nth degree. Northerners came to your consultations. They engaged in discussion with you. The OFIA, the forest companies, the environmental movement and the communities all went to the process, and they said, "Okay, you want to engage in a process of discussion around how we change tenure reform. We're prepared to have that discussion," and they put forward some ideas. The problem is, none of them ended up in the final product.

So yeah, are we upset? Absolutely. Because we say that there's a huge disconnect from what was said at the consultation meetings to what ended up in the discussion in the final draft of the legislation. Cry me a river when it comes to the government trying to say they need this in order to allocate timber.

In regard to what's going to happen with the American countervail, we're opening ourselves up to a situation, as we said right from the beginning of the debate—both Howard Hampton and myself and others—that once you open this up, you're never going to be able to close it down again. We're going to be in a position where American mills, Manitoban mills and Quebec mills will be bidding on Ontario wood, and we'll be sitting in our communities going, "Bye, wood. Bye, jobs. Bye, prosperity." Somebody else can have it, and we won't have anything to do with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the member for Peterborough's comments on this particular bill. It is obviously a bill that has engendered some controversy, but basically we are talking about renewing our forests, doing that in a competitive way, making sure that our communities get jobs, making sure that our entrepreneurs have access to wood—in many cases today, they do not—and making sure that it's a locally responsible way of pricing wood.

To be fair, some members have suggested that we have these local companies holding all the wood. Well, most of them are multinational companies. They are not northern companies; they are multinational companies that have head offices all over the place, mostly not in this province. So what we're really talking about is allowing the—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Michael A. Brown:—allowing people that have viable business plans to get pieces of the forest at market price so that we can both renew the forest and get the best value for the people of Ontario.

I had in my office, some time ago now, a multinational corporation come in—they operate around the world, really—and they said, "We own some forest land in the US, from our woodlands, which is a separate division. If the tree is worth more, we'll sell it to the competitor, because it's about the value of the wood in the forest, not about whether we have vertical integration." That's how they do it. I'm not so sure it's right, but that's what they do, and we have to understand that in a competitive world we have to be competitive. We have to be competitive in the way we renew our forests and we have to be competitive in the way we produce our products.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: One of my colleagues said he suspects government members have been drinking the Kool-Aid. I think they've been drinking the punch and there's been a lot in the punch.

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I just want to deal with the countervail issue. I don't know how many times I've heard Liberals, whether federal or provincial, over the last 15 years come forward and say, "Well, if we just do this, the United States will stop their countervail activities in terms of our forest products." The reality is, federally and provincially and

in other provinces, many of us—many provinces have turned themselves inside out, upside down and back again, and do you know what happens after every process? The Americans start the countervail again.

I don't know what punch this government has been drinking, but British Columbia thought that by going to a bid system there would be no more countervail. Go out and try to make that argument in British Columbia today and you'd get laughed out of the province.

The current federal government said, "If we sign the softwood lumber agreement with the United States, they won't countervail us anymore." Well, try to peddle that argument anywhere in Canada today and you'll get laughed at.

Now we have Liberals in Ontario trying to peddle the same argument that has been proven over and over again not to have any credibility. This will not stop American countervail. You will not stop American companies looking for some reason, some excuse to shut down softwood lumber or other wood fibre from moving from Canadian jurisdictions to the United States. That's just the way it is. But I say, don't turn Ontario inside out, upside down in terms of our forest tenure for something that's not going to work. You will regret this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Peterborough, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the members from Halton, Timmins–James Bay, Algoma–Manitoulin and Kenora–Rainy River.

The fact of the matter is, the Americans always challenge everything. If you look at the history of the last 200 years, American legislators have always challenged a whole variety of policies in another jurisdiction. Even though former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney brought in NAFTA in 1988 and it was sustained by Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Martin and by Prime Minister Harper, and with every future Prime Minister it will be sustained, the fact of the matter is, there's a long history in the United States with these trade disputes. They've been after us for years on supply management, and they will continue to do so. They will continue to look at other policy initiatives in each of the provinces and indeed, national policy initiatives for trade disputes. That's the nature of their society and it's the nature of about half of the House of Representatives and about half of the American Senate. That's just what they do. They keep challenging anything. I always say that the Americans' view is, free trade if necessary, but not necessarily free trade. That's the way they operate. It doesn't matter what policy we bring in here; there will be some trade challenges to it. That's just the way it works.

But the fact of the matter is, Bill 151, in my view, and I've talked to some people—the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—will give the opportunity for tracts of crown forest in northern Ontario that have been tied up for many, many years, not being used to create productive opportunities in northern Ontario—this Bill 151 will have the opportunity to bring that about. This bill will go to committee, and I look forward to hearing from the various representatives on this bill.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to take a moment to correct the record. According to the Ministry of Finance, Ontario's sunshine list does not include taxable benefits or severance payments found on T4A slips. I indicated otherwise in my comments this morning, and I apologize for that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's interesting listening to this debate because they're talking about US countervailing and I think you, as a government, have solved that problem. The Americans aren't going to be countervailing us because we're not shipping any lumber down there any more. Certainly your electrical rates in the north have put an end to much of that export.

It's anecdotal evidence, I agree, but sitting, watching trains go by—as you do in the country quite often, stopping at a crossing and watching trains go by—it wasn't four or five years ago that perhaps half the train might have been lumber going south. I watched a couple of trains on Sunday—I had a bad day on Sunday; I got caught twice, once going in to town, once coming out—and there wasn't a lumber car in the whole thing. There were a lot of automobile cars; about half the train was automobiles, but there wasn't one carload of lumber travelling.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's very unscientific, anecdotal, but it has a habit of turning up in the statistics about three months later. Something that my friends across the way will note: The exports of lumber to the United States have declined drastically in the last few months and years because of the electrical costs in the north that have had such a serious impact on the north and particularly on the lumber industry in the north.

They talked about the timber going for auction. I would agree that there has been trouble with the allocation of trees in the north for years and years. Quite often, attractive land—remember, in the north we're talking about very few species of trees. An owner of the rights to that particular piece of land may want the conifers off that piece of land, and the birch may go unharvested. There would be a market for the birch. If somebody could get at it, there could be a market for it, but because the person who owns the land doesn't need the birch, it goes unharvested.

Surely there's a way under our existing system to get around those inequities within the current system without turning the entire system upside down. That's what this bill does; it turns it upside down and, as was pointed out by a previous speaker, the system moves towards a system that has proven to be a failed system in other parts of Canada and the United States.

The other thing that has been brought to light is the effect that this bill might have on the bidding system. A mill in Quebec, with their power rates that they enjoy, the electricity costs, can afford to pay more for a tree than a

mill in Ontario can, because Ontario is stuck with Ontario hydro rates. That makes it more economically viable for the mill in Quebec to buy the timber. And when you watch the timber go across the Quebec-Ontario border and you watch the jobs go with it, it's going to have an added detrimental effect on the cost of doing business in Ontario's north.

That's a shame, because this business is the north. The lumber industry, the timber business in the north, whether it's pulp and paper or lumber mills, is the big job creator. Mines will come and go. A mine might have a lifetime of 10 to 25 years, and it will provide some tremendous economic viability over that period of time, but when the mine plays out, so do the economic opportunities in that area. Properly managed, our forests last forever. They will continue to produce jobs, revenue and economic activity forever, if they're properly managed. I don't see this system that you're bringing in, which is based on failed systems in other parts of Canada, as doing anything to help the long-term interests in the forest industry in Ontario.

Remember the long-term interests: They're not the next five and 10 years. Long-term interests in the forestry business are 40, 60 and 80 years. It takes that long to grow a tree. That industry can be ruined in five and 10 years. So if you take this system that you're implementing and suggest that over the next five and 10 years, you're going to have tremendous success with it, which is possible, that tremendous success is going to be played out over the following 30, 40 and 50 years, when there are going to be shortages of timber in various areas because of the mismanagement of a third party that you've put between the government and industry in these local forest management units.

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I think it's a terrible mistake to take the vital responsibility of allocating resources and transfer that responsibility to a committee of any sort. I think that's a long-term formula for disaster, especially when it's based on a system that has proven to be a failure in other parts of Canada. I think you're going to hear these concerns when you take this bill on tour across the north. I hope that that tour would be extensive, that you visit two or three cities in northeastern Ontario and two or three cities in northwestern Ontario, and make sure you hear from the groups that are going to be abused by this particular legislation.

The system you are moving toward will institute more countervailing activities by the United States as the economic recovery for Ontario begins to take hold. That will probably happen sometime after October 6. It has happened that way in the past, and I'm sure it will happen that way in the future. As that begins to take hold, this system will not prevent countervailing activities by the US, as no other system will. The Americans challenge everything, and they'll challenge this system as much as the next system. So don't expect this system to solve your problems. It will not solve those problems.

I think the government should take a step back. Have a very close look at the things you hear and the things you find out during the committee hearings. Most bills have an importance in committee hearings. This bill is just that much more important. I think the industry has to speak loudly to the government to ensure that they understand the degree of the mistake they are making in introducing this kind of legislation, giving this kind of authority to organizations that have different interests than the long-term management of Ontario's forests.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's pretty clear that the government is intent on moving forward with this bill. They want to get to committee and get this bill passed this spring, prior to the next provincial election. I just give you this warning: If you think this is good stuff, then I ask you to run on it in northern Ontario. I tell you, there are going to be a whole bunch of people in northern Ontario who are going to see this just like the HST; they're going to see this like every other popular initiative you put forward.

People in northern Ontario understand what needs to be done. We currently have legislation in this province that gives the province the authority to do what it needs to do when it comes to wood allocation. The problem with what you're putting forward is that you're not even trying to have it both ways; you're trying to have it like four ways.

On one hand, you're go to the Tembecs of this world who currently have a licence—let's say an SFL in the Gordon Cosens—and saying, "I'm going to put at risk the tenure of the wood you have in your mill." That's essentially what you're doing in what you've put forward in this legislation. The minister can cancel an SFL at a whim on the basis of what you put there. Listen, people in my part of the province are not enamoured with the Tembecs of this world and others, but they understand that the wood has to be secured as far as supply to the mill because you can't finance anything.

On the other side, you've got communities that are saying, "I'm Smooth Rock Falls, and I've lost my only employer in town. I want to have some wood associated to my community so I can reborn myself; I can go find somebody else to start a mill in my community." You're not even responding to that in what you're doing here. Because at the end of the day, if you go into a competitive bidding system, it's not going to be Smooth Rock Falls that is necessarily going to get the wood; it's going to be the lowest bidder, and that could be somebody in the United States, in Manitoba, in the northwest or in Quebec. It won't necessarily be the community—

Mr. Howard Hampton: Highest bidder.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And so it is going to be the highest bidder, not the lowest bidder. Excuse me; good point.

But the government, I believe, is wrongheaded in their approach to this whole thing, and I think, if you want to run this in the next election in northern Ontario, do so at your own peril, because I can tell you, if we come back as government, I'll get rid of this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the comments, of course, from the member from Halton.

I really want to try to find a way to correct some of the misinformation that's out there. The fact is that in terms of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, I believe it's section 30, protections are put in place to make sure that wood actually stays in the province of Ontario. There's very real clarity about that. That, in fact, happened under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994. I believe that the member for Kenora–Rainy River was the minister at the time. This is certainly very much a red herring, I guess is maybe one of the terms. The point is, it's just not there. This is about making sure that our wood gets used in the province of Ontario.

May I also say that when you talk to industry about this, as we have extensively—and we're working closely with them—they are as keen to see advances and modernization of the tenure proposal.

I will acknowledge that, indeed, there are concerns being expressed by the OFIA and by industry. That's why we're working so closely with them. In fact, they've expressed specific concerns about some of the wording of the powers that have been ascribed to the minister in terms of the potential cancelling of the sustainable forest licenses. Again, there's no desire to do that. What there is, is a desire to make sure that our wood actually gets used, that our crown fibre is actually used in the province of Ontario, changing, I'm afraid, what happened in the past.

We're working with industry very closely, very positively. I'm looking forward to hearing their thoughts during committee and, quite frankly, we're looking forward to finding a way to come back to a place we were at not long ago, where there was full agreement with us moving forward with these proposals.

The enhanced shareholder sustainable forest licences will be a real advance, which will bring together a whole number of companies working together to see our wood being used and then to test those principles through local forest management corporations—at least one, maybe two. There's another—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I don't have a whole lot to say other than what our honourable member has been talking about, but it concerns me that the minister just spoke on this and he was indicating, and he's a very formidable minister, I must say, that the people are in favour of this.

Now, I have a letter. I don't know when this letter was done—March 11, 2011—and it says, "In light of these concerns"—and there are a whole lot of concerns in here—"our association is unable to support the bill"—so we're getting two different messages in here—"in its current state. However, if Bill 151 is amended to reflect industry's concerns, we would continue to support government as it moves to modernize tenure in Ontario."

Are we going to have amendments? I haven't heard that. Now if there are going to be amendments—I always think when we have amendments to a bill it means they made mistakes. Why didn't they get it right the first time? Governments seem to have problems with that, don't they, Mr. Speaker? I'm sure you would agree with me if you were sitting out there, but you're in the chair; you would have a hard time now. It would be nice that when government has bills, they get them right the first time, but they have trouble talking to people about it. They have some bureaucrat or somebody like that who wanted to make up their own mind and they don't go out and ask people first. It certainly would be nice.

This was from the Ontario Forest Industries Association. They have a lot of concerns. Until we see that those amendments are going to be made, it would be difficult to support the bill. We have no indication that these amendments are going to be made—none whatsoever.

I notice that the member from Algoma–Manitoulin is wanting to get into the debate, so I'm sure he will debate it, either now or later.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

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Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't know if other government members are going to get up and speak to this, but I hope that if they do, they will forsake the punch before they get up to speak to it.

I just want to make a few comments on my colleague from the Conservative Party. On most of these issues, New Democrats and Conservatives do not agree—I can go back over the last 20 years—in terms of forest tenure etc. But I think my Conservative colleague is rightfully concerned about what this government is doing, just as New Democrats are concerned about what this government is doing.

I've heard lots of excuses from government members offered up as to why they're bringing forward this legislation, but I haven't heard any reasons. On the first day of debate, I heard government members say, "Well, we need to change the tenure system because we need to reallocate wood fibre and we need to reallocate licences." I just read last week that the minister is reallocating all kinds of wood fibre to five or six different companies he was boasting about, and he's doing it without this proposed legislation. He's doing it with the existing legislation. I know if I went back three weeks ago, there was another press release where he was talking about reallocating wood resources and licences, not with new legislation but with the existing legislation, so that excuse doesn't hold any water.

Then most recently, we've heard that putting wood up for bid is going to result in a more competitive system. Let me tell you something: What it will result in is companies that have mills in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan and companies that have mills in Quebec playing all kinds of silly games with Ontario wood resources—another excuse that doesn't hold water.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Halton, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Apparently there are a large number of concerns about this bill. As the member from

Owen Sound has pointed out, the Ontario Forest Industries Association has some real concerns about it, talking about how they can only support it with significant amendments to the bill. If the government knew this, or if they had consulted with a major trade association within the industry, you would think they would have consulted in such a way that they would have avoided these kinds of pitfalls that they seem to have got the industry involved in.

Moving the timber allocation to an association or to a forest management committee made up of six or eight or 10 people, or 12 people on the board—every single one of those people who are on that board is going to have a vested interest. Leaving the future of a very sensitive resource in the hands of people with vested interests, taking it away from where it is today, is a very, very serious step. I just hope this government considers that serious step very seriously and understands what they're doing to Ontario's northlands. It's a beautiful part of the province. There's an absolutely fantastic number of great people up there who are totally committed to their land, their resources, their trees—they're not our trees, they're their trees—and want to see success in the north. They're willing to work hard and long and fight for that success.

I hope this government thinks just as long and just as hard about what they're doing to the future of those people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak? Does the minister wish to make a final response?

Mr. Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 151. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The chief government whip, pursuant to standing order 28(h), has requested that Bill 151 be deferred until deferred votes. That will be after question period tomorrow, during deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 10, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for acknowledging me and giving me the opportunity to talk about Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters.

I'm very pleased to talk about this very important bill because this bill deals with an extremely important issue, and that is the health and safety of workers. I think it is an obligation of us, the Legislature, of course, to ensure that we have very strict and stringent rules and procedures in place to protect the health and safety of workers, but also to ensure that our businesses, employers, employees, workers—everyone—play the role necessary to ensure that we protect the lives and the health of our workers. It is something that cannot be compromised at any time whatsoever. Any injury that is suffered by a worker—all action should be taken to prevent those injuries. Unfortunately, if ever a life is lost, that is even more grave. Any life lost is one life too many.

We recall that it was last year, I believe, that some workers did lose their lives in Toronto at a construction site—an extremely, extremely tragic event that should not have taken place. What we need to do is ensure that that does not take place and that we've got the proper rules and regulations and laws in place that prevent that from taking place. I believe that what this particular bill, Bill 160, is doing is ensuring that the rules are there and that the rules are even stricter to ensure that we protect our workers both in terms of their lives and their safety but also their health.

This bill is bringing changes to the health and safety system that will make workplaces safer, to help all Ontario workers come home safe at the end of the day, which is, I think, undeniable. Nobody can really disagree with that.

If these amendments are passed as put forward in Bill 160, they will benefit all Ontarians, employers and employees alike. Employees would have enhanced safety training as a result of this particular bill and a more effective reprisal complaint process as a result of the bill. What I mean by "effective reprisal complaint process" is a situation when a worker is fired for reporting unsafe work conditions. That should not be tolerated, and that is considered in this particular bill.

I will get into, in detail, what the bill is trying to do, but in a nutshell—just so that those who are watching at home know what Bill 160 is proposing to do—it is making certain amendments to the existing regime in the province of Ontario through the Occupational Health and Safety Act and through the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. What this bill is doing, through amendments, is transferring provincial responsibilities from the WSIB, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, to the Ministry of Labour.

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It is appointing a new chief prevention officer to better coordinate the prevention system that exists in the

province when it comes to the health and safety of our workers. It will create a new prevention council with representatives from labour, employers and safety experts to advise the chief prevention officer and the minister; and if the bill is passed, it will enable the Ministry of Labour to set new training standards, revamp the reprisal process and develop codes of practice that help business with compliance. That, in essence, is what this bill is trying to do through the amendments that are being put forward, both to the Occupational Health and Safety Act and to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

The bill has come forward through a very detailed process of consultation. As I mentioned earlier, there was, unfortunately, an incident that took place last year in Toronto that resulted in the loss of lives of workers, an egregious incident that resulted in loss of lives. But the result of that accident and those fatalities was the creation of an expert advisory panel by the Minister of Labour to get people who work in this area to give advice as to what changes could be made in our rules and regulations to ensure that that type of incident does not ever take place in the future.

The expert advisory panel was headed by Tony Dean, who is very well respected by all sides on issues around labour. Under his leadership, the panel received more than 400 responses in over 50 meetings with stakeholders across the province. The panel consisted of the chair, Tony Dean, and nine safety experts, again from labour groups, employers and academic institutions, so that we've got the full complement present in order to ensure that the recommendations being put forward to the minister are representative of the sector or the industry. The panel included representatives of labour, employers and academia with workplace health and safety expertise.

The panel looked at a variety of issues including:

—the need for enhanced training, including basic health and safety awareness training;

—the impact of the underground economy on health and safety practices, a very important and serious concern, I think, in order to ensure that our workers are safe; and

—how existing legislation serves worker safety.

These are some of the key issues that were looked at by the expert advisory panel led by Tony Dean in the review.

There were certain recommendations that were made by the panel, which I think instructed the Minister of Labour to come up with Bill 160. Some of the key recommendations that were put forward in the report were requiring "mandatory basic health and safety awareness training for all workers"—I think it's an important point—"supervisors (free of charge to employers)" and improving "integration of occupational health and safety training into school and educational programs."

Also, identifying and developing "mandatory training requirements for high-hazard work, particularly construction work and work at heights," because these are situations where the likelihood of injury or fatality is even higher, and special training should be required in those types of situations.

One of the other recommendations made in the report by the expert advisory panel was requiring "mandatory training for workplace health and safety representatives."

The panel also recommended a mechanism to "expedite the resolution of reprisal complaints under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and improve protection for new workers, youth, recent immigrants and foreign temporary workers through mandatory training, greater availability of multilingual and web-based health and safety resource materials, and the establishment of a committee, appointed under section 21 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, to advise the minister on issues related to vulnerable workers."

I think it's very important advice from the panel. It's extremely important that we tailor the safety requirements to the varying needs of workers within the system. Not everybody is alike, as we know. Youth engage in perhaps different types of circumstances; they don't have that extensive training and would need that. So it is for recent immigrants, who may not be proficient in English, or again, they may have different, varying degrees of training in the past but are working in dangerous situations and it needs to be ensured that there are facilities available for them to be trained properly.

There were recommendations around better support for small businesses as it relates to section 21. New prevention organization is, I think, a big part of this bill. The panel recommended that the Ministry of Labour should assume responsibility for the coordination of prevention program delivery. This is currently the responsibility of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and other partners, so it's sort of a shift of responsibility from the WSIB to the Minister of Labour.

Also, an important recommendation that was made by the panel was around the appointment of a new chief prevention officer who would report to the Minister of Labour to coordinate and align occupational health and safety system strategies, priorities and programs and oversee Ontario's health and safety associations. The officer, the new chief prevention officer, if the bill is passed, will report annually to the minister on the state of the system and work collaboratively with all parts of the ministry as well as with the prevention council to redesign injury prevention systems and integrate them with the ministry's enforcement mandate. There is sort of a coordination—an individual, as the officer who is responsible for looking at and working on issues around prevention of injury for workers. It's very much part and parcel of the recommendation made by the panel.

Lastly, I think another important recommendation that was made by the panel was the creation of a new provincial council, a council which would consist of multi-stakeholders. As work begins to implement the recommendations and the new system structure, this council would advise the chief prevention officer and the ministry with respect to setting strategic priorities and measuring the system's progress.

Again, a very important set of recommendations was made by the expert panel. I had the opportunity, in my

riding of Ottawa Centre, to work closely with a lot of unions which supported these recommendations and felt it necessary that steps be taken to further strengthen the current mechanism that exists through the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act by the adoption of these recommendations put forward by the Dean panel.

So what is Bill 160 doing? How is Bill 160 implementing these changes? Under the proposed legislation, there are structural changes that are being made to the occupational health and safety system that will provide for a new prevention organization within the Ministry of Labour. As mentioned earlier, that has been one of the key recommendations made by the Dean panel; that is, to have a dedicated organization within the Ministry of Labour to look at issues around prevention of injuries, making sure that work sites are safe for our workers—both for employers and employees.

The legislation, if passed, would transfer the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's prevention mandate to the Ministry of Labour. Under the legislation, a new chief prevention officer will be created who will report to the Minister of Labour on strategic priorities that will provide leadership on the prevention of workplace injury and occupational diseases. The Ministry of Labour would expand its involvement in workplace health and safety education and promotion to ensure that we have a more coordinated effort, coordinated strategy and coordinated leadership when it comes to prevention of injuries and occupational diseases that could be suffered by the workers.

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The minister, if the bill is passed, would also have oversight of the province's health and safety associations under the leadership of the chief prevention officer. This authority could be delegated only to the chief prevention officer, again making sure that the mandate is there to provide for that coordinated leadership.

As recommended by the Dean panel, a new prevention council with representatives from the worker and employer communities and health and safety experts is also being created through this bill, if passed, which would provide valuable input in the direction the health and safety system takes with respect to preventing occupational injury and disease.

Further, the minister would also have the authority to establish standards for health and safety training in order to enhance this training and ensure that workers are properly trained, again the idea being that, through these changes, there is a more centralized place, and what better place than the ministry itself, the Ministry of Labour, and through the minister to ensure that there is coordinated leadership and a coordinated strategy that would allow for prevention of injuries and the safety of our workers.

Under the legislation—and I think this is a very important point—workers, especially the most vulnerable workers, would have improved protections against reprisals for exercising their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act—again, a recommendation that came through the Dean panel.

These are the changes that are put forward in Bill 160. The ministry is working very closely, as my understanding is, with the WSIB to develop a transition plan to make sure that these processes are accountable and transparent to further protect the lives and safety of workers.

I am very supportive of this bill because I think it really takes into account the recommendations that were made by the experts under the leadership of Tony Dean and other members of the panel who were part of it. These are the people who know the realities on the ground. These are the people who have the opportunity to work with workers, to represent workers, and who know what works and what does not work.

I think our obligation is to make sure that this is a good piece of legislation. Of course, the views of other members from all sides are extremely important to ensure that this bill really does what it needs to do, and that is to prevent injuries to workers, especially prevent any fatalities that may be faced by workers, especially in dangerous working situations. That's what this bill is trying to do.

I think the bill gets more credence because it is a result of an exhaustive consultation process that has allowed for it to include a broader canvas of issues that would allow for a better regime in place as outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Again, I think this is a concern which is shared by all members in all our communities, be it my riding of Ottawa Centre where I see—especially when it comes to construction sites, there are many, given that I represent a downtown community. There are towers and high-rises that are being built at all times. Every time I pass through a construction site I always wonder if everything that is being done at this site is according to the rules and regulations to make sure that workers are working in safe conditions.

It is, of course, our responsibility as the Legislature, as people who create policy, who make laws, that we continue to adapt our rules, to make sure that there are strict responsibilities that are attached and training that is provided to our employers and employees so that our workers continue to work in safe working conditions.

Thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important bill. I look forward to hearing the views of other members on Bill 160 and responding if there are any issues that arise.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This bill is a huge exercise in expanding and creating more and more bureaucracy.

This is all based on the terrible accident that happened a year and a half ago, just before Christmas, a particularly sensitive time of year. It took the lives of four workers. Those four workers were working in poorly maintained equipment. Surely, there's legislation in

Ontario today that would prevent these kinds of things from happening. If it were more strictly enforced, this terrible accident would have never happened.

But it did happen, so there was an inquiry. A blue-panel group of people came together and developed 46 recommendations, if I'm not mistaken, some of which are being implemented in Bill 160. It will create a number of new positions, a number of new councils, not one of which would ever prevent the terrible situation that occurred a year and a half ago when four people lost their lives. Nothing that this bill has proposed would prevent that terrible accident from happening.

I'm not sure what we're doing here today, debating this bill, but I don't see it as being something that is going to save the lives of Ontario workers, such as were grievously taken in that terrible accident a year and a half ago.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't think there's any doubt in the mind of anyone in this chamber that in fact Ontario's approach to occupational health and safety has to be strengthened. As my colleague Mr. Chudleigh just said, this act and the inquiry that preceded it arose out of a horrendous incident that happened at a construction site here in Toronto.

I had an opportunity to meet the survivor of that workplace accident. I had an opportunity to meet him in the company of his parents. It is extraordinary to me that this man survived. He is clearly extraordinarily resilient, both physically and mentally, to have gone through what he went through. My hope is that very few people in Ontario and very few parents have to go through what he and his family have gone through.

I am pleased that there is legislation before us. It is my hope that in the course of committee hearings, in the course of debate, this legislation will be strengthened. It is entirely possible that Mr. Chudleigh is correct, that the bill as written will not bring about the enforcement necessary to properly protect the working people of this province. I would like that, in fact, to be a very different outcome. So I say to the government, you've brought forward a bill. We're going to have a chance to debate it here. You have an opportunity, in the course of committee hearings and in the course of further debate, to actually assess the shortcomings of the bill and correct those shortcomings so that the deaths which so shocked the people of this province, the unnecessary deaths, the unnecessary suffering, will have resulted in at least prevention of further deaths and suffering in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Etobicoke southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Scarborough.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Scarborough Southwest. I apologize to the member, but Etobicoke is a nice place, too.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could speak for two minutes about the Scarborough Bluffs, but instead, I'll focus on the bill in front of us today.

I just wanted to congratulate the member from Ottawa Centre on his very good presentation on Bill 160, which amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I think this is one of the largest, the most important changes in the last 30 years. As the member from Ottawa Centre mentioned, it creates a chief prevention officer. That chief prevention officer is very important because he or she will be advising the minister on a bunch of matters that are important. The most important thing when people get up in the morning is that they want to make sure that there's safety in the workplace, whether it be in Scarborough Southwest, Etobicoke or anywhere in Ontario. The member from Ottawa Centre has touched on these issues.

1600

It's a very, very large bill. The chief prevention officer will take advice from a prevention council, which is also unique because the prevention council will be made up of different members who are involved in work issues, and they will advise the chief prevention officer, who will then advise or provide information to the minister.

It does really overhaul the bill quite a lot. The changes here are quite extensive and I think, in the final analysis, the workplace will be a lot safer and the changes will help make sure that workers return back home safe after they go out to work in morning to their various work sites.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to respond briefly to the member for Ottawa Centre, who spoke to Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters.

Of course, this is a complex bill that was introduced in this Legislature March 3. We are now at second reading. I'm still in the process of hearing from my constituents on this issue in terms of their views and ideas with respect to workplace safety and how this bill might be improved.

Based on the complexity of the issue and the importance of the issue, I would hope that we would hear a commitment from the government today to send the bill to a standing committee of this House for public hearings to allow all parties that would have an interest in this issue—and when I say "parties," not political parties, but representatives of organized labour as well as business and the organizations that are out there—to have an opportunity to have a say.

Surely, if we're going to make any meaningful progress in terms of improving workplace safety, we need business buy-in. I note, from the speech that was given by the minister when this bill was introduced for second reading, that he went to great lengths thanking the various people who were involved in Tony Dean's committee. Trade union organizations were in the majority on the committee, it would appear, from the people that he thanked. I would just submit and suggest that it's very

important that we listen to business as well and employer organizations, because obviously they have to be brought to the table to discuss this issue, too, and we need to have their buy-in. We need to make sure whatever legislation or regulations we bring forward through this Legislature are workable, sensible, practical and that business can buy in. I would caution the member and suggest that. I would certainly be interested in hearing more if he can give me more information as to which business organizations were consulted—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Ottawa Centre, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I very much appreciate the comments made by the members from Halton, Toronto–Danforth, Scarborough Southwest and Wellington–Halton Hills.

I think we all agree that this is an important piece of legislation. I think we all agree that the cause behind it, the purpose behind it, is extremely important, and that is to prevent injuries and fatalities that may be suffered by workers. My interest in this legislation is purely because I see a lot of construction that takes place in my riding. I represent downtown Ottawa, as I mentioned earlier. I've got high-rise after high-rise, business tower after business tower that are being built, employing hundreds of workers who work in these buildings every single day, and every time I pass any of these construction sites I always hope and pray that these workers are safe. Any step that we can take to ensure that those workers are safe is an important step.

I think all members acknowledge the unfortunate fatalities that took place last year in Toronto. I think it sent shivers in everybody's spines and nobody wants to see those type of injuries or fatalities take place in their communities. I'm extremely glad that the government acted immediately to strike an advisory panel that was made up of experts to give recommendations as to how we can further strengthen our system, the occupational health and safety system, in the province to ensure that our workers are safe all across the province. I am also even happy to see that Bill 160 is implementing those recommendations to ensure that we have a more coordinated approach to prevention of injuries for our workers. I wholeheartedly support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate. The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak in regards to Bill 160, the Act to amend the Occupational Safety and Health Act. I for one had, in my former career, something to do with health and safety in my previous role where I was responsible for safety and health and construction permits. Also, earlier in my career—actually, while I climbed on a lot of scaffolding, I won't say I built a lot; but I had to rely on a lot of other people who were in the scaffolding industry. When we were working out in the field, we relied on their work. I know this ties back to scaffolding mainly, and a lot of other issues.

Our feeling on this side of House is that we're for the Dean report but we're not in favour of this bill entirely because we think it needs a lot of amendments, a lot of improvements. It deviates drastically from the original Dean report, which we commend, because they did take a lot of time to look at a lot of issues. The bill does nothing to prevent employers—bad employers—from entering the black market, and would in fact drive employers back to the black market by creating more uncertainty and bureaucracy.

The bill would create yet another bureaucratic committee for some of these patronage appointments who certainly bring nothing to the table but take a lot away. While the bill contains numerous new obligations/regulations etc. for industry and for labour, it has no similar requirements from the labour community itself. As with other recent Liberal bills, many of the substantive portions of this regulation and legislation are being left to the regulations themselves. As we all know, the devil is in the details.

In the bill summary, when we look at it, it calls for the creation of a prevention council and a chief prevention officer within the Ministry of Labour. This chief prevention officer would take over control of all occupational health and safety activities within the government and within the province. It would remove prevention activities from the WSIB's mandate, where they are now, and upload them to the Ministry of Labour under the control of this still unnamed chief prevention officer. It would give the Minister of Labour oversight and the ability to set standards for health and safety associations.

It would also authorize the minister to license and set standards for training programs recommended by this chief prevention officer, another onerous load, probably, on small business and corporations that are struggling to do business in this province. It would certainly—it kind of runs counter to their Open Ontario comments, that they're opening Ontario to do business.

We all know that this was highlighted and launched because of Christmas day, 2009, when four workers unfortunately were killed when they were working on a project and the scaffold collapsed. The scaffold had been improperly maintained. Apparently, this same company, to my understanding, had been cited a number of times for problems and nothing had been done. There were a number of inspectors running around the province, supposedly doing their job, and for some reason or not they ignored this site. That would be interesting to look into that.

Anyway, a one-year study—it was called the Dean report—led to a lot of recommendations and the institution of this bill. As I said, we on this side of the House are in favour of the Dean report itself but are against the bill as written. The prevention council, which is only an interim body—the current prevention council is an advisory and interim body alone. They're all patronage appointments, apparently, a number of people on there; I won't go into their names. The minister intends, I think by June, to appoint a permanent chief

prevention officer. The government has a number of these unofficial ministries already that seem to pop up whenever different portfolios are announced. Rick Smith from Environmental Defence apparently had bragged somewhere that he played the McGuinty government like a fiddle on forestry policy, and some people say that's why they lost 60 mills and 40,000 industry jobs since the government put this unelected minister in charge.

1610

This prevention council you've set up is unaccountable to anyone but you and is unable to do anything more than collect per diems and advise. It's going to be full of very interesting people, I'm sure; we're looking forward to seeing who some of those people are. We have our thoughts on who some of them might be, and I know you know who those people are without me mentioning them by name.

Accountability is another issue that we have big concerns about. This new position would be moved from—and this new bill would be moving that position—the WSIB, where it's currently present. This current system is too fragmented, but this proposal will focus all responsibility and accountability on one person, this new chief prevention officer. The chief prevention officer apparently would have authority on behalf of the minister to develop and implement a provincial Ontario health and safety strategy. These strategies would include preventing work-related injuries and illnesses and changes to funding and delivery of prevention services.

These would be extremely broad responsibilities. The success would be very dependent on the success of one person, which is putting a lot of responsibility and access to that one person, so we'd be very concerned that this one person would have total control over this prevention strategy. If I was the minister or if I was the government of the day, I'd want to make sure that we got the right individual in that position because they're going to have a lot of responsibility and a lot of issues.

The bill calls for the disallowing of section 21 committees. This bill would repeal section 21 committees that were set up by all of the trades in industry. This was the only truly unified voice for labour and business to sit at the table. Tony Dean in his report endorsed the continuation of section 21 committees, and now the McGuinty Liberal government is going to get rid of them. Instead of volunteer health and safety committees, what we would get in this province would be another patronage appointment council that would place people in charge of health and safety who have other obligations to other industry and appointment issues.

The Dean report recommended that we should have a board with powers, but instead the McGuinty government is creating a toothless advisory council at the same time as you remove industry from the equation by gutting section 21. In the old system there were some checks and balances. The WSIB, the minister and the health and safety associations all shared some responsibility. Now there would be none of that. It would all be left to regulations. This chief prevention officer would then, at that time, make all the rules, call the shots and make these types of calls for the industry as a whole.

As I said, in my former role I had the opportunity and the privilege to be responsible for health and safety in industry. I had to sign my name on the dotted line a number of times for permits that call for and do safety audits. I'm sure there's probably not too many members who are in the House—as I look around, I know that there's a number who probably worked in the field. I see our member from Peterborough, and I know that some of my colleagues from the NDP have actually worked in the field. Maybe the member from Ottawa—a number of people who actually worked in the field or were responsible for safety permits, health and safety.

I guess I'm concerned about how much thought actually went into this report. I think they should probably have looked at what Mr. Dean—I've got no problem with him, and I know our caucus has no problem with that original report. We endorsed it. We felt that they had taken a lot of time when they looked into this original tragic accident. We're not convinced that appointing this chief prevention officer and taking away these other responsibilities from industry and from labour and from the community at large would necessarily prevent those types of tragedies from happening. I don't think there's anything that can do for common sense.

It's unfortunate that a number of these people—especially in this case, where they probably didn't speak the English language enough to be able to even understand what the rights and obligations were of the employer and also what their rights were. I'm not convinced that by appointing this chief prevention officer—it looks to me like it's so they can say they've done that, run around the province and say, "Oh, things are going to be so much better now because we've got a chief prevention officer who made these types of changes." I know from my experience in the past that it takes a lot of hard work.

Now that I think about it, I'd like to talk about Sarnia–Lambton, my riding. Our riding is 25 times safer, according to the Minister of Labour's own comments to me a number of times—I know, coming from Sarnia–Lambton—than any other jurisdiction in Ontario. In fact, a number of the ministers—I go back three now, since I've been here, since 2007—have told me that they'd like to see the Sarnia–Lambton experience taken across the province and probably across Canada, because in Sarnia–Lambton what we have is a great opportunity. We have labour, we have management, and we have the cooperation of both of those. It costs a lot of money and it takes a lot of time, but it's reflected in our accident rate. I know they're proud of that record there.

We have over 5,000 tradespeople who are in organized labour, and we also have a lot of non-union contractors and non-union employees who also have a great safety record in Sarnia–Lambton. I can speak to that, and I know that's the case because a number of massive and major projects have been built there over the years. I worked in industry myself, like I say, in the past, and I still liaise with a number of these people. In fact, a

number of weeks ago, at an energy, environment and economics symposium in Sarnia–Lambton—I wish the member from Peterborough had been able to come down and join me at that. I know he would have enjoyed himself. He has invited me to Peterborough a number of times.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Is that an invitation, Bob?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, it's an invitation—any time.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Give me a date.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'll come up with a date.

The Minister of Labour, I know, has had a number of opportunities to be in Sarnia–Lambton and to see what we do there. I would hope that some of those ideas would be incorporated as we look at amendments into this bill, because I'm not convinced, from what I've seen and from the industry that has made some comments toward this, that this is going to go that far toward making improvements.

Like I say, what they should do is probably come down to Sarnia–Lambton. I'll make the arrangements, if the committee would come down there, and you can get a real awakening; people will see how to do things right. I could even bring them here. I could probably bring them down to Queen's Park, if that's where the committee hearings are. I could arrange to have them come down here, and they could tell the minister and the committee and a number of people who would be interested, if people express all this interest that they really want to do what's right and the right thing.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Take a cruise on the St. Clair.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah, we could do a cruise on the St. Clair as well. The ice is out of the St. Clair. I've been out on the St. Clair. I just recently drove along the side.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Why is he more interested in the cruise than he is in the committee?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, they're more interested in the cruise than they are in the committee, but that's okay. We could do both.

Anyway, to get back to Bill 160, certainly, I'm quite proud of what we do in Sarnia–Lambton. I know the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—she adjoins my riding and she's familiar with what goes on. A number of her constituents, as well, live in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex but also work in Sarnia–Lambton in industry and in related support industries. She knows from where I speak that we do do things right up there, and we didn't need this chief prevention officer to do that. But, like I said, we've been at it a long time there, whether it's industrial, commercial or residential construction.

The section 21 committees, to get back to those: Our concern is that the Dean report recommended a board with powers, but instead, like I said, the government has created a toothless advisory council at the same time you remove from industry their one and only opportunity to have input. As we look back on how this all started, we feel this would only lead to the underground economy expanding.

This started with the tragic death of a number of people working in the construction sector for a company which, at the end of the day, didn't train them properly. At the end of the day, I'm not convinced that this would change that.

1620

The Dean report made a recommendation that one of the ministries other than labour should have policy control over going after the underground economy. This bill ignores that. There's not a single dollar for new inspectors or any form of strategy to go after employers who do break the law. Instead, it's what we have seen from this government time and time again: We have more red tape, more uncertainty and more patronage, more chances for workers like those tragic four on Christmas Eve who lost their lives to fall through the cracks and unfortunately be statistics that we don't like to see.

Like I said, if they come down to Sarnia–Lambton—or I could bring our health and safety people from industry to Queen's Park when we have this committee. I know that they would be glad to come down and give their opinion and have input into this on how this bill could be corrected, made better. At the end of the day, we want to make it better.

As I said, we support the Dean report; we don't support this bill as it's written.

One of the other items: The Dean report spoke about costs. The Dean report said very clearly and explicitly that any changes to the occupational health and safety system should be cost-neutral. This bill, in my opinion, is not cost-neutral, and the McGuinty government is trying to hide these costs in the regulations.

Right now there are over 100 employees in the WSIB's prevention department, 100 people making a full salary and benefits package of probably at least $100,000 a year. How much is it going to cost if they do away with this department, like the bill says, get rid of these people? Would it be a $2-million severance package overall? Would it be like when the HST was harmonized with the GST and they got rid of the Revenue Ontario employees? They just changed hats one day and went over to work for a different department. I don't know what these contracts say, but I'm sure they're well written if they had good lawyers at the time. Would you do the same then? Would you keep these people on staff and pay them probably just to stay in the same lottery pool? They'd just change hats or business cards at the end of the day. We want to know more about that, too, and how they're going to address that.

Under training: Training costs was another big issue that the Dean report covered. It was one of the biggest components of the Dean report. In this bill, where is it? Training in this bill is a one-line item, that the minister can set this training up. There was widespread agreement that there is a need for a lot of training, but the training costs will be borne by the employers. Why have you tried to hide that in the regulations in this bill?

The Dean report asked for a tracking system for training. This government is on record as having wasted over $1 billion on electronic health records, and we got

nothing in return. Now how are you going to convince the public that you can set up a tracking system for training under the construction safety or building trades that would be any more effective? The jury's probably in on that job. You can't do that. You can't convince anyone of that.

Under regulations, as with most recent legislation, you've left the most important details to the regulations instead of actually dealing with these problems, like the old saying, "The devil's in the details." There's no mention of costs, which will not be insignificant. There's no mention of training, which is important and makes up one of the biggest parts of the Dean panel, what they advocated for, that training would be a big part of this.

There's absolutely nothing in this bill that would stop or restrain the underground economy, which is a huge problem in the construction sector—not so much in my riding where it's a little more organized, but I know in other parts of Ontario this is certainly a problem. It's certainly a problem for the legitimate contractors, the legitimate workers out there who go to work every day and want to come home at the end of the day to their families safe and sound. I know that there's the underground economy, and as we have more rules and regulations, it forces people to go to that underground economy, and it forces the good contractors, the good employees, to go to organizations like that to try and make a living.

At this point, I think I've summed up about all I'd like to say on Bill 160. Like I say, just to wrap up, at the end of the day we support the Dean report and a number of the recommendations in there. We feel that this bill went far away from the Dean report. It's left a lot of things for regulation. I would look forward to this bill going to committee, where we can make a number of recommendations.

I leave that invitation out there. I will bring members from Sarnia–Lambton down here who can show this government how to get things right, and at the end of the day we could look after worker safety.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I will have an opportunity very shortly to talk about the bill itself, but I wanted to address two points that were raised by the member from Sarnia. One is that he's quite correct: If in fact the government doesn't take action to deal with the underground economy, we will have businesses that will operate, effectively, outside of the law. They operate outside all of the licensing regulations; they ignore health and safety. If we actually are going to deal with these situations, if we're going to have a substantial move forward, there has to be another component, and that is dealing with that underground economy.

The second point that I want to make, though, is that enforcement and action cost money. We have police forces in cities all over Ontario to enforce the Criminal Code, to enforce bylaws. It costs money to enforce, and that will be true of regulations related to health and safety as well. They cannot be enforced, they cannot be made effective without people who are hired, trained and directed to ensure that an act is in place and changes the behaviour of those whose behaviour is dangerous.

Although the previous speaker hit one good point, I think to say that you can have enforcement and safety without cost is not realistic, doesn't reflect the rest of our society and doesn't help us move forward in assessing what has to be done with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I just wanted to address some of the comments made by the member from Sarnia–Lambton. He mentioned the complexity of the bill. It is very complex, but I think the best thing that the government can do at the end of the day is to put in place prevention organizations, which we're doing, and removing it from the workers' safety board and creating a chief prevention officer, along with a council that would advise the chief prevention officer, who would then advise the minister. I think that's been overlooked a little bit. The role of the council is quite important here, because it will be made up of different members from different parts of the working environment, and that council will advise the chief prevention officer.

This act here is only the beginning. There are many more recommendations that will be implemented through further consultation, and that's been made very clear through comments made earlier, and also by the Dean report. The bill doesn't create more bureaucracy; I would argue that it's removing some of the bureaucracy and it's creating a more streamlined, integrated system.

Also, the member from Sarnia–Lambton was concerned that the power would be centralized with the chief prevention officer. I want to reiterate that once again: It won't be centralized because there will be a council which that person, the officer, will take advice from.

We have lots more input and lots more consultation on this bill. The council can even go out, look at and talk about the issue regarding the underground economy, deal with it and bring it forward to the chief prevention officer.

Finally, I wanted to say that the bill, under section 7, talks all about training. There are a number of sections I don't have time to read right now, but it does talk about training, and we will focus on training in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to respond after the comments made by my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton. I was intrigued with the 20% decrease that's happening in his community, and I hope he does get the opportunity to bring those experts forward in front of the committee, and ultimately in front of the prevention officer, to share some of those successes.

1630

I don't want to lose track and lose focus of the fact that Bill 160 was as a result of four deaths on December 24, and while the concept behind a prevention officer

may have some good points, I don't want to mislead people into thinking that would have helped these four construction workers. The reality is, they were working in an underground economy. They were not being regulated, not being controlled by the existing process and the existing WSIB, and certainly, if the chief prevention officer was in existence at that point, they wouldn't have been helped then, either.

So I hope that we don't lose track of dealing with these individuals who choose to operate in Ontario without the rules. It affects all of us. It hurts all of us, whether we're working in it or whether we're a law-abiding business that's actually trying to follow and maintain the rules as we set out here. It will help no one if we don't deal with the illegal operators and the underground economy. Ultimately, I would like us to concentrate more on how we are going to solve that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: While this bill was born of a tragedy, and a tragedy I think that we all look at now and say that the measures in this bill, if enacted at the time, might have been able to prevent, we should also recognize that Canada in general, Ontario in particular, is one of the safest places in the whole world if you're going to be in the building trades and construction.

One of the reasons that in Ontario, and Canada in general, we're able to maintain the standards that we do is that we're never satisfied with the status quo. I think that what we're seeing right here in this bill is an effort to take a look at a system that, throughout the world, is recognized as being not merely good or very good but excellent, and we're saying there's got to be a way that we can take excellent and not only keep it excellent, keep it at the leading edge, but make it measurably better.

Several of the other speakers have noted that one of the things in this bill is the establishment of a chief prevention officer and more attention to the occupational health and safety system, and in doing that, one of the things this does is to take a lot of the work in the building trades and bring it up into the sunshine and out from underneath the underground economy. Indeed, in Ontario today there are fewer and fewer incentives to do anything other than to run a clean game. With the financial disincentives owing to the ability of the chief prevention officer and occupational health and safety workers, and your inability as an employer to claim the very substantial input tax credits, getting everybody into a system that provides the optimum protection for the worker in Ontario is really what this bill is all about, and it's a very good reason to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Sarnia–Lambton, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank the members for Toronto–Danforth, Scarborough East Pickering, Dufferin–Caledon and Mississauga–Streetsville for their kind comments on my dissertation on Bill 160.

One member talked about that this council is going to have such great input. It will all depend on who the members are on that council. If we have to have a chief prevention officer for the province of Ontario, at the end of the day, I would like to recommend that that chief prevention officer probably should come from Sarnia–Lambton, because they've already proved that they can do this type of work. They've had a great safety record down there. The minister himself has acknowledged it—a number of Ministers of Labour. I know that this government has had a number of them, and I've met with most of them. As they've had the opportunity to tour my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, they've spoken about the great safety record and the great programs and cooperation that we have in Sarnia–Lambton.

So I would like to recommend, like I said, that if we have a chief prevention officer or if we have a council of people from across the province at the end of the day who are going to give input, then at least one of those people should come from the Sarnia–Lambton building trades and construction area, because I know they would have the best interests of the workers of the province, because they've already proven that in our industry there locally.

I'd like to also make that offer again. I'll be speaking with them again today when we leave the House, and I'll make sure that they know about these hearings that are going to be coming to Queen's Park, and hopefully they'll travel. Maybe they'll be in Sarnia–Lambton; they should come to Sarnia–Lambton if they go on the road. It's where most of the construction in this province takes place. The industry is there, and I would recommend that they come to Sarnia–Lambton. They'd be remiss if they didn't.

I would make that invitation to whoever is doing the scheduling. In fact, I'll insist that, if they travel at all, they come to Sarnia–Lambton. Everything is going to London or Windsor; somebody come to Sarnia–Lambton.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to start off by noting that what we're talking about today is occupational health and safety very broadly, not just construction safety. It was an accident, four deaths at a construction site, that triggered the Dean inquiry, that triggered this legislation and that captured the attention of this whole province, as has been said, because it's something that happened just before Christmas and because the workers were ones who were already not the most privileged. In fact, they were quite desperate. In talking to the one survivor of that incident, they were well aware that things were not as they should be but didn't feel that they had the opportunity, the options, to be working elsewhere. They were scared when they went up on that scaffold and, unfortunately and horrendously, were right to be scared.

It isn't just construction workers. Every day across Ontario, people are injured on the job. Sometimes it's a very visible injury; sometimes it's a long-term injury, a weakening of tendons or a fracturing of bone that leaves people in a position where they can no longer work. I, Speaker, and you may well have as well, have had

constituents come to my office who have worked in industry who can no longer work because of a repetitive injury that has rendered them unfit to continue to engage in heavy physical labour. For a variety of reasons, they often are not in a position to move to another place. Either from lack of skill, ability, training, they are finding themselves in a position where they are trapped.

When we talk about these matters, we have to remember that we're talking about whether people live or die; are injured or kept whole; will be allowed to be productive through their whole lives, support themselves and their families and make sure there's adequate provision for themselves to retire or have their lives and their working ability cut short so that, in fact, their life is one that becomes dramatically more difficult than it had been.

I'm pleased to be part of this debate on the legislative response to the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety report, the long form of what we're talking about. We understand, in the NDP, that Bill 160 represents a set of compromises more or less worked out in the Dean report process. Implicit in these compromises is the fact that neither labour nor the employer gets everything that they want in the way of changes to Ontario's health and safety regime. Sometimes that's reality. Politics is a compromise between different forces.

But even taking that into account, Bill 160 falls short of what we had hoped for in terms of implementing the Dean report recommendations. Before I talk about the changes that are embodied in this bill, I'd like to talk a bit about the NDP's vision of what a real progressive change might look like in Ontario's health and safety regime.

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In the NDP's view, fundamental change in Ontario's health and safety regime would mean, first off—and I mentioned this in an earlier comment—external enforcement. Enforcement has to be based on the principle that the cost of non-compliance is greater than the cost of compliance.

As you are well aware, the pressure on companies to produce profits is a profound pressure. It's neither moral nor immoral; it just simply exists. Any large company that trades on a stock exchange knows that every day its ability to raise capital is affected by its ability to produce profits, and so the pressure to make those profits and to cut those costs is profound.

If, in fact, there's going to be a counter-pressure so that the workers who work for those companies, who produce those profits, are kept whole, are kept alive, are kept healthy, then there has to be a pressure from government so that all the companies that are out there in that market have the same pressure applied to them, are all well aware that they are not going to get an advantage by cheating on health and safety, or will not be disadvantaged because they actually respect the law and some other corporation doesn't.

In order to enforce, and enforce effectively, there has to be an increase in the complement of inspectors who are out there seeing that the law is enforced—industrial hygienists who understand the impact of different chemicals and substances on people's health, and the cost-effective techniques for preventing those substances from damaging people; ergonomists who make sure that machinery and equipment are designed and operating so they don't cause strain damage to the human body; toxicologists; occupational health physicians; and scientists at the Ministry of Labour—as well as providing inspectors with ready access to relevant scientific research and databases.

Production in this province in this century is not the production of two centuries ago. It can be extraordinarily complex. In many ways, some of the grunt labour that our ancestors engaged in has been replaced by machine labour, but in many ways, we're now dealing with substances and processes that we couldn't have imagined decades and centuries ago, that pose new risks and threats to people. We didn't build 30-storey buildings 200 years ago—we barely built them a century ago—but we now operate at much higher heights than we ever did before, and so the ability to work safely and productively requires a different set of knowledge.

When we want to make sure that people are safe when they go to work and that their families have some assurance that they'll be back at the end of the day, then it takes investment in enforcement and in knowledge. We need that.

In order to ensure that those inspectors have an impact, we need to introduce a more immediate and effective system of employer and supervisor penalties that can be dispensed by inspectors and that don't involve the court system, along the lines of a speeding ticket, Speaker. You and I both recognize that someone who's travelling 150 kilometres or 160 kilometres on the 401 is risking their life and the lives of many others. Police are given powers when life is at risk to issue tickets and summonses on the spot. For the same reason, inspectors who deal with workplaces where people's lives and limbs are at risk need to have greater power than they have now.

We need to simplify the prosecution process so that inspectors can prosecute straightforward cases more speedily.

Again, if the new rules that are being put forward in this legislation, the new regulations that will come out of this legislation, are actually going to have the impact that they need to have, then the inspectors, the enforcement workforce, have to have the power to make things happen in the workplace, to change them from what they've been before.

The province must develop an effective process to ensure the prosecution of appropriate cases under the Criminal Code. If in fact you operate in a way that, by omission or commission, is resulting in the death or maiming of people in your company and, under other circumstances, you would be charged with murder or assault, I see no reason why we also in Ontario shouldn't recognize that criminal negligence can happen in the workplace and should be prosecuted as such. Because, in the end, all the people in this province who work, their

sons and daughters, their families, deserve to have the protection from those threats that they would expect to have walking down any street in this province. They should have that in the factories, in the stores, on the construction sites of Ontario.

I've talked about the need for investment in external enforcement, but we also need internal enforcement. We need to look at the provision of power to certified worker members to stop dangerous work, to issue stop work directions, so that the scale, the ability to reach into every corner of work in this province is facilitated.

We need to provide certified worker members of joint health and safety committees and health and safety representatives with the authority to issue provisional improvement notices, calling for dangerous situations to be rectified quickly, immediately.

Employers should be obliged to implement recommendations made by joint health and safety committees and health and safety representatives because, frankly, even though I believe it is necessary to have external enforcement, even though I think it is critical to have external enforcement, it needs to be complemented by a system of internal enforcement so that people in their workplace can act to protect themselves when they are in danger.

We need to provide joint health and safety committees and health and safety representatives with the right to be consulted on the development and implementation of health and safety policies, programs, measures and training.

It seems straightforward enough to me that those in the workplace who are most knowledgeable about health and safety conditions, about the conditions of work, about the need for improvements and the ramifications of changes, need to have the right of consultation awarded to them. We need to provide workers in all workplaces with the right to have health and safety representation. We need to provide members of joint health and safety committees and all health and safety representatives with the right to standardized certification training, with annual renewals from a training organization of their choice.

It is to the advantage of this society as a whole to substantially reduce death and injury in the workplace, and an investment in enforcement and training and an extension of power to the people who work in the workplaces of this province are advantageous to our whole society and not just to those individuals.

In order for all of that to work, there needs to be an enforcement and a strengthening of the provisions in the Occupational Health and Safety Act against reprisals. We need to give ministry inspectors the power to investigate alleged reprisals and to reinstate workers and order back pay and/or damages.

1650

There are many good employers in this province who, when presented with evidence that something is unsafe, will act to correct that unsafe condition; there's no doubt about it. But, just as with all other areas of human endeavour, there will be employers for whom the health and well-being of their workforce is very low on the list; for whom the primary concern is their own betterment, their own profit, their own gain. One of the cheaper ways of making sure that they don't have to act on health and safety would be to intimidate those who work for them to keep them quiet about problems. In those circumstances, the workers in those workplaces need to know that they will be protected against reprisals. We need to make that part of this legislation. The Ministry of Labour must prosecute reprisal cases where evidence is found that employers have tried to intimidate workers who have been standing up for their health and safety and the health and safety of the people they the work with.

We need to provide workers who are alleging reprisals with an effective, simplified forum to make their reprisal case when an inspector has not investigated or acted on a reprisal allegation. It goes without saying that simple, straightforward mechanisms that allow workers to point out that something is unsafe, to act for correction of that lack of safety and to deal with reprisals of bad employers is good government policy. We need that.

We also need to improve and expand health and safety training. We need to provide all members of joint health and safety committees and all health and safety representatives with the right to standardized certification training, with annual renewals from a training organization of their choice. The curriculum of certification training programs must be standardized to ensure that all certified workers and employer representatives receive equivalent training. We need to provide all new employees, supervisors and managers with mandatory, relevant and meaningful health and safety training, necessary for them to fulfill the duties of their position safely and competently.

If, in fact, you are training a manager to control inventory, to avoid loss, to ensure that quality is high, training them in the 101 things they need to make sure that in the area in which they have authority, production goes well and goes smoothly, then safety training to protect the working people in their workplace has to be at least as important as those other tasks.

We need to increase the health and safety support and resources for workers. We need to adequately fund the resources for workers, such as occupational health clinics for Ontario workers and the Workers Health and Safety Centre, to ensure that all workers have access to trusted resources for expertise, health information and training.

Without knowledge, without training, no one can effectively ensure that people are safe in a workplace. If you don't know the consequences of a particular operation, of a particular chemical, of a particular practice, then you can't knowledgeably guard against it for yourself or other workers.

Lastly, I wanted to say that we need a regular review of health and safety systems, legislation and regulations. We need a systematic review process to ensure the system and the law meets the needs of modern workplaces and work practices. Right now, we have a system

of review that seems to be incident-triggered: Something horrendous happens and then people are shocked into awareness, the alarm is rung and an inquiry is held. It would be far better if, on a regular basis, we reviewed our health and safety legislation, looked at its failings and its achievements, and took steps then to consistently, regularly improve the system to make sure that everyone who goes to work in the morning is able to come back alive and fully bodied at the end of the day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I just have a few comments to make on the presentation from the member from Toronto–Danforth. He's canvassed the bill very thoroughly, and I appreciate his comments. I'm just going to provide some comments back.

One of the comments made was that we need safer workplaces. We on this side of the chamber agree. We've hired a lot of safety inspectors, I think more than any other government has, in our time in office.

He also mentioned that we need better prosecution, and we agree with that as well. We're putting in place a prevention organization with a chief prevention officer and a council, and that is the most important thing we can do as a government: to make sure that it works and that the chief prevention officer interacts regularly with his or her council.

Also mentioned was that we need workers to have the right to make sure that they can complain without retribution. This act provides for that, that they are safe, that they will not be fired and no discipline matters will be taken against them if they do that kind of thing. It's right in the bill here.

We need provisions in the act to provide protection for migrant or new workers, and that's also provided for in the bill here.

We need health and safety training—that was brought up. This bill speaks extensively about that and providing for that.

Overall, to summarize everything, we're creating a new position—brand new—a chief prevention officer, who will be neutral. That person will report, using the help from his or her committee, directly to the Minister of Labour. That's the most effective thing we as a government can do: to make sure, through the Dean report, that people do come back safe from work every day and they don't have to worry about getting hurt at work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to add a few comments with respect to Bill 160, the act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

A lot of the comments that have been made by my colleagues in the PC Party have indicated that we are very respectful of the work that was done by Mr. Dean and his group. They have made a number of significant recommendations and we certainly need to give them a lot of consideration.

As my colleague the member from Dufferin–Caledon indicated, we shouldn't lose focus of the reason for the Dean committee in the first place, which was the fact that four people lost their lives and another person was very seriously injured on Christmas Eve a year ago when the scaffolding that they were working on collapsed. That is something that we do need to bear in mind—the reason why all that happened and the fact that we are looking at an underground economy—that certainly none of the provisions that are being addressed by Bill 160 would have been of assistance to those people, unfortunately, because of the fact that a lot of the activity that they were working on wasn't being properly monitored in the first place.

We do need to be proactive in taking action on the underground economy and the so-called black market in order to make sure that all workers in Ontario are properly represented and that there are proper training practices in place, and it is worth the money that we put into it.

As my colleague the member from Sarnia–Lambton indicated, in his area there's a 25% less incidence of workplace injuries, in large part due to the work that's gone into proper workplace safety and monitoring practices.

I think that we need to keep the focus on that as we go forward and debate. I hope that we will have a full discussion on this. It is a matter of significant interest and importance for employers and employees across the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: There are a few provisions in this that really make this piece of legislation an important milestone, and I'm just going to deal very briefly with just two of them.

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One of them is clauses that deal with anti-reprisals. In the building trades especially, it's often the case that a worker is very worried about the safety and security of his or her position if they complain about a practice that they know to be improper, illegal, unsafe or whatever. What this bill proposes is to allow the Ontario Labour Relations Board to deal with workplace reprisals in a more timely manner. While workplace issues with the OLRB—some people like them and some people don't; what this also means is that inspectors would be given the power to refer matters of workplace reprisals to the Ontario Labour Relations Board in such circumstances, presuming the worker agrees.

The other one, I think, is regulation-making authority. The proposed amendments include a regulation-making authority to allow the Office of the Worker Advisor and Office of the Employer Advisor to, in the future, provide support to both workers and employers in reprisal cases. What this does is to ensure sufficient implementation time, as this would involve a little bit of working out of the details at the time. These provisions could come into effect on a date that doesn't have to be specified.

All in all, what this one does is anticipate some of the issues that may arise and provides means by which these issues can be successfully and completely resolved in the interests of greater worker safety.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Before I respond to the member from Toronto–Danforth, I think that of course, all of us in this Legislature would like to express our sincere condolences to the two volunteer firefighters who lost their lives over the weekend in Listowel. We know that men and women, whether it's police, fire or EMS, every day when they put on those uniforms, never know what their days are going to be like. Some of them don't come home in the evening. As I said, we express our sincere condolences to those families.

I listened carefully to the member from Toronto–Danforth. He made some very interesting observations—very articulate—on Bill 160, the Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act. I was in this area during my private sector career, as a health and safety officer. I know that each one of us in this Legislature wants to make sure that we have the appropriate legislative framework in place to make sure that when Ontarians, working families, working individuals go to their workplace each and every day, that indeed it's as safe as possible. I think we go to no end to make sure that we can do our best to ensure those kinds of working environments are as safe as possible.

These amendments, if this bill is passed—and it will go, I believe, to committee—will transfer prevention responsibilities from the WSIB to the Ministry of Labour, where I personally believe those responsibilities should rest. The appointment of a new chief prevention officer to better coordinate the prevention system is similar to the chief fire prevention officer and the chief medical officer of health in the province of Ontario. The establishment of this position is consistent with other officials we have in this province—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Member for Toronto–Danforth, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Scarborough Southwest, Whitby–Oshawa, Mississauga–Streetsville and Peterborough for their comments.

My expectation is that this bill will get through second reading and will go to committee. It's my hope that in committee, people from across Ontario will come, put forward their analysis of the real state of safety—or lack of it—in the workplaces of this province, will make recommendations that will substantially strengthen this bill, will address the gaps that do exist in it and that, in fact, those gaps will be addressed in the course of a committee process.

I think that this Legislature owes no less to the people of this province than a bill that is a fitting memorial to those who died so recently and a fitting instrument to prevent further deaths and injuries.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 60 today. From some of the comments that I've heard this afternoon, it certainly sounds like, within a lot of the provisions of the intent of the bill, there's agreement around the House that it's a good thing that we do something to protect the interests and the health and safety of those people who go to work every morning. In our society it's a very normal thing to do; it's what drives our economy.

Perhaps in the past, if you go back quite some time in the past, worker health and safety really wasn't such a big concern. The profit motive was always put ahead of those, and it was expected that accidents might happen on a regular basis. As we have evolved as a society over the years, people have come to believe that it's more important that people return home safely at night than it is that a company put profits above that. I think what's also come as a result of that is that those companies that have a good safety record, those companies that have exhibited the sort of corporate social responsibility that you like to see out of a modern corporation, are obviously the safest companies; they're also the most profitable companies. I think in the past it was often viewed that if you were going to have a good health and safety record within your corporation or within your company, it was going to cost you money. The evidence that I've seen throughout the province of Ontario is that if you're an employer that's got a good health and safety record, you also will be one of the most profitable companies in the province.

I was able to do a tour of the chambers of commerce and boards of trade in my time as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour. We travelled around the province of Ontario with that message to a lot of corporations, to a lot of companies both large and small, saying that if they were to become more serious about having a good safety record, they would find also that it would improve their bottom line. At the same time, we knew that by doing that, we'd be preventing the accidents from happening in the first place and that the men and women and the young people who went to work in the morning would return home safely at night, but they would also be working in secure jobs. They'd be working for companies that had a very strong economic foundation, but also had a culture within the organization that really, I think, acknowledged and respected the right of workers to not have to put themselves in harm's way doing their daily duties, whatever the job entailed.

A person who I came to respect on this issue in large measure was Duncan Hawthorne, president and CEO of Bruce Power, a very strong advocate for health and safety, for workers' rights, and a gentleman who himself came from the shop floor as well and moved up the ranks of the organization, but I don't think has ever forgotten where he came from and I don't think has ever forgotten how important it is to have a culture of health and safety within your organization. How he defined a culture of

safety is that culture is what happens when nobody's looking. That is, it's one thing to inflict rules upon somebody else or to inflict regulations upon them, but the idea really, if you're going to get a preventive strategy implemented at any organization, is that those people who are active in the organization on a daily basis—the members of management and the members of labour—have to feel and have to believe that each and every action they take can be a safe action or can be an unsafe action, and that there are ways to ensure that each of those actions that they take on a daily basis are indeed safe actions that won't result in injury.

So I think the chamber tour really gave me a good understanding and a good appreciation for some of the frustrations of business, some of the frustrations of labour, but underneath it all, underpinning it all, was an element of goodwill. The people didn't want to know that there were people who were being injured within their own organization, and certainly those people who were being injured or the family members of those people who were being injured didn't want to feel that there would be any sort of a reprisal for refusing to put themselves in harm's way.

1710

So I think we started to look at the system in a way—and we understood that it could work in a number of ways. But my observation is that, in many respects, the system had developed into a process-based system: A number of inspections would be performed, and a number of charges would be laid. It wasn't really measured on the outcomes that are the really important outcomes; that is the number injuries that were prevented or the number of injuries, more importantly, that weren't prevented and could have been prevented.

There's a saying out there that every injury is a preventable injury, that there's no such thing as an accident. I think when you start to examine the inner workings of a good health and safety plan, you realize that that is true. You have to ask yourself if you have a prevention-based strategy, one that prevents the accidents from happening in the first place, or if you have a reactionary process that kicks into place after an accident has taken place, and perhaps an investigation follows, some lessons are learned, and you move on. I'd like to think in the province of Ontario, as we move forward, that we have a system that's based on prevention, that's based on the outcomes, that's the sort of system that prevents the injuries from happening in the first place.

If you look at the existing regulations and legislation you have to prevent accidents and you feel that you want to make them better—by all accounts, I think all members of this House decided that they wanted to make them better, or they could be made better. There were varying opinions, I think, as to how that might happen. But I think if you're taking a strategic overview of any organization or of the aims of that organization, if you're looking at the basic concepts of what that organization is supposed to accomplish, in this case, what we wanted in the province of Ontario was an organization that was going to prevent accidents from happening in our workplaces on a daily basis.

I think to do that, like any other business endeavour, like any other element of public policy, you've got to look at the communications you have, you've got to look at the organizational structure of the organization as it currently exists, and you have to see if you're marketing the message. Are the workers and the employers of the province of Ontario buying into the message that a safer workplace is a more profitable workplace?

One of the other things that was quite alarming and quite surprising for me to learn when I was at the Ministry of Labour is that the most dangerous time in your entire working life is in the first week of the first job you ever have. More people are injured on the job in the first week of the first job they ever have. I would have thought that, as you moved into different jobs, as you moved into more complex jobs and more sophisticated jobs, the risk of injury would increase. But exactly the opposite is true: The most vulnerable workers in our society are also the youngest ones.

I've talked to parents in my own constituency office, parents of young people who have been injured quite badly on the job. I can think specifically, without using any names, of talking to the father of a young man who had his arms crushed in a cardboard compactor. That young man had wanted to be a firefighter one day. Unfortunately, that probably isn't going to happen now as a result of the accident that's taken place—a very preventable accident by all accounts. So to sit across from a father as he recounts what happened to his own son in this regard is something that really motivates you to want to make sure that this doesn't happen again.

Those of you who maybe have met Rob Ellis as he's toured some of the high schools—he lost his son David in Oakville at a cookie company the second day on the job. The second day on the job he was asked to do something with a piece of machinery that he wasn't familiar with and ended up tumbling into the piece of machinery. He wasn't killed instantly, but he didn't last very long after that—a very, very young man.

When you hear Rob Ellis speak to a group of assembled high school students, who are usually pretty rowdy and pretty hard to bring under control, he tells his story about his son David. You can hear a pin drop in that hall. That's the sort of message that I think we need to get across to the people of Ontario: that there is something we can do about it; that there's a lot of tragedy that's taken place in past, but there's no reason that tragedy has to continue into the future; that if we're able to improve our process, that if we're able to improve the way that we address this issue, we can do better than we've done in the past. The young man I know who has been injured permanently—and David Ellis would not have to go through, very tragically, what he went through, culminating in his death.

We also met on a number of occasions, when I was at the Ministry of Labour, with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Now, they're always concerned

about the cost of doing business. As a small business owner, I understand those costs. I know what it takes to come in with a positive bottom line, and sometimes it's tough. But what the CFIB and labour agreed on, during any meeting I was at, is that we need to concentrate on the bad guys, to leave those people with a good health and safety record alone, ensuring that plans are updated, of course, and that training continues on a regular basis and there isn't any slippage; let's go see what's happening in the underground economy, let's go see what's happening in those companies that have poor health and safety records, let's find those people who aren't even contributing to a health and safety insurance plan for the employees in the province of Ontario.

Even though this can be a polarizing issue, it can also be an issue that unites both sides of this argument. I would hope that would happen on this piece of legislation and on the amendments that are being proposed today, because the structural changes that we're being asked to approve, if we approve this legislation, are going to provide us with a new prevention organization within the province of Ontario. The mandate of that would be a prevention mandate. I think that's what we all want to see.

The responsibility for that prevention mandate would be transferred therefore to the Ministry of Labour. You'd have a new chief prevention officer who reports directly to the Minister of Labour. That person's job responsibilities and accountabilities are to provide the strategic priorities that are going to result in a system that results in far less tragedy within the average working day in Ontario.

The Ministry of Labour is going to expand its involvement in workplace health and safety. Most importantly, I think where you're going to see it manifest itself is in the education and the promotion of the idea itself, because I truly believe that even the most hard-nosed employer does not want to see injuries within their own companies. Somebody who has got their eye on the bottom line on a regular basis, somebody who may have a different view from mine as to what the relationship should be between an employee and an employer, would still—even the hardest of those people does not want to see the type of tragedy that we've seen happen in the province of Ontario.

Now, there are some who fool themselves into thinking somehow they can skirt the issue or they can avoid the issue or they can avoid paying their fair share when it comes to premiums and that other people will pay their share. Those are issues and those are things that can be addressed and things where I think any reasonable and responsible person who is engaged in this issue, either from a business or from a labour perspective, would agree that the costs should be shared fairly. That's what this is going to bring about, I think.

Workers, especially the most vulnerable workers in our society, need to also have what I think are increased protections against the ability of one of the employers that I just mentioned before to enact any sort of a reprisal against a person who is simply saying, "I don't want to do that job because I think I'll injure myself. I think if you force me to undertake that activity, I'm going to put either my life at risk or I'm going to put my body at risk."

I don't think anybody in this room would want a family member to undertake that risk at work. Some of the jobs in Ontario are very dangerous jobs with very dangerous working conditions, but each and every one of them can be accomplished safely and can be accomplished profitably as well, if we have the right organization in place that helps to educate, promote and guide those companies in assisting them to do what they really want to do anyway. They don't want to have injuries on the job. Morally, I think it's reprehensible, but also, economically, it's not a good thing for the businesses in the province of Ontario to have to shoulder the costs that are associated with the injuries that take place.

1720

The best way of addressing the overall issue is to not have the injuries in the first place, to have a culture of prevention, to have a culture of safety that pervades everything else and just ensures that everybody in that company goes home at night, safe and sound, to their families.

I think if we pass these amendments, and I hope it does get the full support of the House, that it's going to benefit all Ontarians, both employers—being an employer myself—and employees, both union and non-union. I think it's the sort of legislation that families in Ontario want to see passed. Quite simply, when you look at it in its basic form, it's a reorganization of the way that we're going to accomplish those ends. It's a streamlining of the way that we're going to accomplish those ends.

It's based on suggestions that come back from a gentleman who's got the respect of this House and other people who assisted him in that regard, and it's not like they sat in a room and made this up. They went out and held over 50 meetings. That's a large amount of meetings. Having served on a number of committees in the Legislature over the past eight years, any undertaking that results in 50 meetings being held is quite significant and quite substantial. The information I have is that they heard from over 400 responders, people from the employee side and from the employer side of the equation.

They came forward with ideas as to how the system may be made better and how it could be a safer system. They came up with the idea of a prevention council. I love to see that word, "prevention." That means the accident hasn't taken place yet. When you have an organization that's got the word "injury" in it, that means the injury has happened. When you have an organization that's got the word "prevention" in it, that means the injury hasn't happened yet, and it doesn't have to happen. When you have a prevention council, I think that's a wonderful use of the English language.

It's going to have reps from both the employer side and the employee side. It's going to have some of the best health and safety experts that we have in the

province of Ontario on it, and it's going to provide valuable input, I think, on an ongoing basis, as to the direction that the health and safety system in this province takes with respect to—there again—the word "prevention," and that includes both occupational injuries and occupational diseases that have plagued us in the past as well.

The minister would then have the authority to establish standards for health and safety training in order to enhance this training and ensure that all workers in the province of Ontario not only put in a good hard day's work and earn their pay, but are also properly trained to be able to do that job more efficiently and more effectively, and are able to do that job safely as well; that's just as important as anything else that is involved in modern corporate Canada today.

There are companies that buy into this concept already. This isn't a revolutionary idea. I think there are a lot of companies, both large and small, that understand that the reason for their existence is not simply to make a profit. They want to make a profit—and I hope they all do make a profit—but also, I think they've got a larger responsibility to the greater society and that is to be a good corporate citizen. Most of them really want to be that.

I think the hallmark of a good corporate citizen is an organization that respects the people who are actually providing the labour and who are causing that profit to take place in the first place. The greatest resource that these corporations have is the employees who work for them. The best thing they can do, the highest sign of respect, I think, for those people who are doing that work on a daily basis, is to give them the tools and the training to ensure that they're able to accomplish the work that they've been hired to do in a safe manner, in a manner that allows them to produce whatever product or idea or innovative system that they're involved in, not only to produce at a profitable level, but to be able to go home at night and to come back the next morning and do it all over again and make more money. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I don't think there's anything that anybody in this House could argue with.

I'm asking members of this House if they will support the amendments that are put forward. I think they're well thought out. I think they've passed the test, certainly, of the public on this, and the process that's been engaged in has been quite consultative. The message, I think, is clear: We can do better and by passing these amendments, we will do better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talked at great length about the safety issues in Ontario and Ontario's laudable safety record. We have one of the best safety records, I think, in Canada, if not in North America. He talked about how people deserve to have a safe workplace, how employers want their workplaces to be safe, but he didn't say how this piece of legislation will help accomplish those goals.

I suspect that this legislation, the more I hear about it and the more I listen to the government talk about it—I see this legislation as being somewhat bureaucratic in nature. We're going to have lots more committees, we're going to have lots more organizations, but I don't hear about how this piece of legislation is going to make it safer for someone to go to work in the morning and come home at night. We're already at a very high level in that area, but we all want it to be better; we want the goalposts to keep moving as to how safe a workplace can be. As you mentioned, accidents happen because something went amiss. They're never purposeful; they're accidents by nature. But someone had a small lapse, and the result can be anything from a sprain to the consequences that we had a year ago Christmas, with the unfortunate accident in the underground economy.

This bill doesn't mention the underground economy. It doesn't do anything to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments? The member for Mississauga southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's hard to sum up in two minutes what the member from Oakville did in his 20-minute presentation. It was very eloquent and very thoughtful, and I just want to add a few points to it.

The bill in front of us today, Bill 160, is quite complex. It adds a number of amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, so we're looking at two different acts that are being amended.

The amendments are quite extensive. The bill in front of us amends both of those acts. They're important acts, and I think that in over 30 years this is the most important change to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, because it provides for something new that we don't have: a chief prevention officer and also a council, people who will advise the chief prevention officer. The chief prevention officer won't be doing things on his or her own; they will have help from the council, and they will then provide that information and advise the minister.

There will be lots of input and lots of consultation. I think it's quite clear that this bill encapsulates a lot of what the member from Oakville was speaking about earlier: to provide for prevention, to provide for safe work environments, to provide for training, to provide for education, to provide for help for new workers and to protect new workers who start a new job, as well as to protect those who are in more hazardous positions, like those who were on the scaffold.

There's a lot in this bill, and I think it's encapsulated, as a result of the Dean report, in this bill. The member from Oakville was quite eloquent in bringing forward some of the key aspects of this bill and of the amendments that this bill is recommending.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm going to apologize again to the member for Scarborough Southwest. I think it's because when you sit in this chair

for about four hours, your mind goes numb, amongst other things.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I won't touch that, Mr. Speaker, but I've had the same issue over the years myself.

Anyway, I'd like to make some further comments about Bill 160. As I've said, I've listened to some of the debate, both in the chamber and in the anteroom. I had an opportunity to hear a number of the other remarks going forward.

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Like I said, our problem, our issue with it in caucus, is that we support the spirit of the report, the Dean report, but we have issues with some of the bill, as written. We'd like to see amendments to it. We'd certainly encourage the committee to travel to parts of Ontario where a lot of construction takes place. I'd like to see them come to Sarnia–Lambton and/or bring some of those people who are in the field, who work in safety and those types of fields, to Toronto as a last resort, but I certainly encourage the committee to travel to Sarnia–Lambton to see what we do there as far as safety.

As we've said, we feel that this will encourage the underground economy because, as people have to deal with these regulations, it could encourage more people to move to that field because of overregulation and cost. We don't feel it does enough to work, as far as the training aspect of it. The costs are certainly still going to be there at the end of the day for those legitimate and reputable businesses to deal with, and you will still have the underground economy, which will try to escape those types of costs and those types of responsibilities.

At the end of the day, as I say, the Progressive Conservative caucus supports the spirit of the Dean report, but we certainly do have issues with the bill itself and feel that it needs more amendments, that certainly it could be improved; and we look forward to those, when it does go to committee, that will commit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Oakville, I think, did an incredibly good job on this particular bill, Bill 160. He talked about it from a very interesting perspective, I thought. He looked at it from a corporate perspective, a profitable business, and he made what I think is a very key link: A safe and healthy environment where people work each day is a very productive environment and adds significantly to the bottom-line operation of the business. I mean, it goes without saying: If you have a workplace that is not safe, it's not a productive workplace. Show me any business that doesn't have a stellar safety record; it is not a very profitable operating entity. And anything we can do to strengthen the health and safety provisions in the province of Ontario to improve that level of safety, to improve the level of a healthy working environment, is something all sides of this House should certainly strive for.

The expert panel, which was headed up by Tony Dean—and I think Mr. Dean is recognized as one of the premier public servants throughout this country. He has served with several governments in an outstanding way. His advice and his leading this particular panel, I think, add a great deal of credibility to the panel itself and, indeed, the recommendations that were made by this panel. They received over 400 responses and had 50 meetings with stakeholders across the province. That certainly indicates to me that they went to the nth degree to solicit opinions and views on how we can improve the safety in Ontario's workplaces.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Oakville, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It was great to hear some of the comments. I think, for the most part, they were positive. It was interesting to hear that most people in this House, if not all people in this House, indeed support the spirit of the intended amendments.

As the process unwinds—as it will, as a piece of legislation travels through this House—different ideas will get tossed around as to how the interests of the passage of this legislation can be structured in a way that best serves the needs of the workers in the province of Ontario.

But some of the key points that I heard and I think are important points—some of the things that are being suggested by the passage of this bill, for example—would be training for high-hazard work, which is something so that people, particularly in the construction fields and for people who work on heights, on scaffolding, for example, on some of the high-rise buildings and "skyscrapers," we used to call them, are protected in a special way, because, obviously, the potential for a catastrophic injury is much greater in a high-hazard area. So I'm glad to see that this piece of legislation is going to focus on that as well: better protection for those workers who are vulnerable, who don't understand that in Canada we do things differently, that in Ontario we do things differently.

I think we should all be proud of the record that we have in Ontario, no matter which party we belong to, as to the human rights that we accord to workers from an employer-employee perspective. Those people who are new to this country or new to this province may not be aware of the rights they have to their own health and safety. This, I think, goes a long way to ensuring that they do.

Better support for small business: As a small business person, it's always tough, and any help you can get is something that is quite welcome.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: A lot of this bill revolves round the Dean report. I think it's probably worth our while to—and I think the Dean report is extremely well respected, as is Tony Dean. He was a former Deputy Minister of Labour and really did a fantastic job as one of the key deputy ministers in the Ontario government.

The Ontario government has a record of having tremendous deputy ministers of very high quality, and by

and large, they do a fantastic job of managing the affairs of government and ensuring that Ontarians receive good value for their government. That may have waned a bit in the last six or seven years, but that quality of individual is still working for the government of Ontario. I have confidence that they will follow the directions that will be implemented in the near future for the best interests of Ontarians.

Again, Tony—Mr. Dean—did a wonderful job of bringing together this report, as you would expect. He was, as I say, a former Deputy Minister of Labour, but he was also principal secretary to the government, which means that he was the top civil servant in Ontario. Most people would assume that the Deputy Minister of Labour, for instance, works for the Minister of Labour. That, in fact, is not the case. The Deputy Minister of Labour works for the principal secretary to cabinet as the top civil servant in the government.

That relationship between the minister and the deputy minister is one of co-operation, moving towards the same goals. Tony Dean was extremely good in that area, which was why he was eventually promoted to being the principal secretary. Of course, that also made him the top bureaucrat in Ontario, and any study that he might have completed—as good as it was and as thorough as it was, with 46 succinct and extremely important recommendations coming forward, it's not surprising that some of those recommendations are somewhat bureaucratic in nature.

There's not much in the report that attacks the underground economy, which is the essence of the problem that we were dealing with when that unfortunate accident happened a year and a half ago on Christmas Eve, as it were. That's unfortunate, because the underground economy is where a lot of these accidents do happen. The underground economy is there with a dollar sign driving it on. The more the government drives up the cost of doing business in the province, the more the underground economy is going to become a way of life for workers and business people and people looking for services. They're going to find more and more of a gap between what legitimate businesses, above ground economies, can provide, the cost being significantly more than the underground economy can supply it for.

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That's unfortunate, because it's going to drive accidents. It erodes taxes. It erodes the revenue base of government. It has unfortunate consequences in many of those areas, and that's very difficult, especially when workers are working in very unsafe conditions. The workers that died on the scaffold that day were without safety harnesses; they were working on a scaffolding that was not maintained properly.

There were all kinds of things that had gone wrong on that particular day, and those kinds of things tend to happen more often in the underground economy than they do in the above ground economy. This bill is going to look at the consequences of that accident. In my reading of the bill, there is precious little in this bill that would have prevented that terrible accident from happening.

This is a particular bill, and I have a release here from McCarthy Tétrault that talks about Bill 160 and the new amendments to Ontario's occupational health and safety legislation. I think I'd like to read this into the record, if I might. I think it's a great analysis of the bill, and what the actual consequences are or how the bill will actually work is outlined fairly well. It does emphasize the fact that there is somewhat of a bureaucratic nature to this bill.

It starts out: "On March 3, 2011, the Ontario government introduced Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters. Bill 160 follows the December 2010 report of a government-appointed Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety. The panel, chaired by former Ontario cabinet secretary Tony Dean, recommended 46 changes to how Ontario regulates occupational health and safety. Bill 160 is intended to implement some of the panel's recommendations. If passed into law, Bill 160 would result in a number of significant changes to the regulation of occupational health and safety in Ontario.

"Below, we have summarized some of the key aspects of Bill 160. As this bill is in the early stages of the legislative process, we will be monitoring its development and will provide future updates on its status."

The government itself has talked about the possibility of amendments to this legislation, and of course, they're talking about committee hearings as well.

"Training standards and approved providers: Bill 160 would amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act ... to permit the Minister of Labour to establish standards for training programs and approve programs that meet those standards. The minister would also be able to establish standards that a person would have to meet before becoming an 'approved training provider' and approve a person as a training provider of one or more 'approved training programs.' The minister would be required to publish these standards." I would point out that none of this, of course, would have prevented that accident from happening a year and a half ago.

"In establishing standards and programs and approving persons as training providers, the minister would have additional powers. For example, the minister could require a person seeking an approval to 'provide information, records or accounts' required by the minister pertaining to the approval. The minister would also be able to 'make such inquiries and examinations as he or she considers necessary.' Finally, the minister would be able to collect information about a worker's successful completion of an approved training program."

Of course, that section of the bill would deal with approved programs and how workers can get on to an approved program, what they're taught on that program, how they graduate from that program and, as they enter the workplace, how they would be safer workers after

having had that program, none of which applies to the underground economy or to people who are going to take shortcuts with our health and safety programs in Ontario.

There's also a section on additional training provisions: "At present, one worker member and one management member of the joint health and safety committee are required to be 'certified' by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Under Bill 160, the minister could establish training and certification standards for the JHSC"—that's the joint health and safety committee—"members and require constructors or employers to ensure that health and safety representatives receive training that would enable them to 'effectively exercise the powers and perform the duties of a health and safety representative.'

"Those individuals who are already certified under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, would not have to recertify." In other words, they would be grandfathered into this process. But, of course, none of this would have helped those four workers who died falling off that scaffold.

Joint health and safety committee recommendations: "Currently, the joint health and safety committee"—that's the JHSC—"has the power under the OHSA to make recommendations to a constructor or employer for the improvement of worker health and safety. Under Bill 160, if the JHSC did not reach consensus on recommendations, either the worker co-chair or the management co-chair would be able to make written recommendations that would include: (1) the co-chair's recommendation; (2) a summary of the position of committee members who support the recommendation; (3) a summary of the position of committee members who do not support the recommendation; and (4) information on how the committee attempted to reach consensus"—none of which would have helped those four unfortunate workers and all of which sounds to be excessively bureaucratic to me.

"Establishing policies: Under Bill 160, the director of the OHSA would be able to establish written policies concerning the interpretation, administration and enforcement of the OHSA. These policies are expected to contain the Minister of Labour's position on the application of the OHSA, with inspectors being required to rely upon them in the course of their duties"—again, no effect on the underground economy or the people working in that underground economy or their safety.

"Prevention council: Under Bill 160, a 'prevention council' would be established and responsible for providing advice to the minister. This council would comprise worker and employer representatives and other persons with occupational health and safety experience. Essentially, the functions of the prevention council would be to advise the minister on the appointment of a 'chief prevention officer,' then to advise the chief prevention officer on health and safety matters."

Again, it sounds as though there's a duplication of effort being made here as to what's already in place and what the government would be putting in place with this further legislation.

"The chief prevention officer would be responsible for: (1) developing a provincial occupational health and safety strategy"—I think we already have one of those—"(2) preparing an annual report on occupational health and safety"—those are the big, glossy folders of about 100 pages that government seems to just love putting out; it doesn't help anyone, doesn't save anyone's life, doesn't make working in Ontario any safer, but I guess it provides some employment for the people who write those kinds of reports—"(3) exercising powers or duties delegated by the minister; (4) providing advice to the minister on the prevention of workplace injuries"—number 4 does have some merit—"and (5) providing advice to the minister on proposed changes to the funding and delivery of services for the prevention of workplace injuries." Again, that may have some merit.

"Finally, the minister would have the power to designate an entity as a 'safe workplace association' or as a 'medical clinic or training centre specializing in occupational health and safety matters.' Any such entity would be required to meet, and continue to abide by, certain 'standards' established by the minister. Any entity that is already designated under the WSIA would be deemed designated under Bill 160."

The organization of all of this material seems to smack of a highly bureaucratic system that, in my mind, would have difficulty delivering a program to the grassroots people who are actually doing a job in Ontario.

"Under Bill 160, section 50 of OHSA would be amended to allow a Ministry of Labour inspector to refer a matter to the Ontario Labour Relations Board regarding whether an employer has committed a reprisal against a worker. The inspector would only be permitted to do so where 'the circumstances warrant,' and where: (i) the matter alleged to have caused the reprisal was not dealt with by arbitration under a collective agreement or by the filing of a complaint with the board; (ii) the worker consents to the referral; and (iii) the director has established a policy on referrals. This proposed provision has the potential to increase the number of reprisal complaints to the board, given that in certain circumstances an inspector on a routine audit would have the power to refer reprisal cases directly to the board.

"Implications for employers: "Bill 160 has only passed first reading on March 3, 2011, and has yet to be referred to legislative committee. As such, Bill 160 may or may not become law and/or may be significantly amended before it is enacted. However, it is important to note that the Ontario government has showcased its 'record' on occupational health and safety, and has indicated that it plans to implement all 46 recommendations of the expert advisory panel within the next three to five years." It's making some assumptions there, I would suggest. "Accordingly, it may be that Bill 160 is only the first step in a more comprehensive overhaul of Ontario's occupational health and safety" regulations. That could cause some consternation amongst employers since the Occupational Health and Safety Act does cause

some difficulty in making Ontario a competitive jurisdiction.

We do have a fine record on working safely in Ontario, and that record is to be preserved. It is to be encouraged in every aspect. I think all members of the House would agree that that's a laudable goal that we want to work towards. One of the problems we want to keep in mind is that all regulations and all red tape that comes into this House does have a cost associated with it. In order for Ontario to remain a competitive jurisdiction and to remain the growing community that it is, the growing jurisdiction that it is, with more jobs and better jobs and higher-paying jobs, it's important that we continue to monitor these increasing regulations and ensure that Ontario can remain the competitive and healthy jurisdiction that it used to be and will be again in the future.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I know all members would like to know that I just got my trusty pocket watch back from the jeweller's. Being the fine timepiece that it is, I refer to it, and it says it's time to adjourn.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Tuesday, March 22.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 22 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Sikh prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Bradley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House today to, first of all, offer some background into the Ontario sex offender registry and the amendments the government is recommending to this important piece of community safety legislation. I think we would all agree that every Ontarian has the right to live a life free of sexual abuse. As legislators, we must do all that we can to protect our children from such abuse.

Ten years ago, almost to the month, Christopher's Law was proclaimed, establishing Canada's first sex offender registry and giving police services the tools they need to track and monitor convicted sex offenders in the province. Christopher's Law was an initiative of the previous government and was unanimously passed by the Ontario Legislature. Christopher Stephenson was an 11-year-old boy who was abducted from a Brampton shopping mall on Father's Day weekend in 1988 by a convicted pedophile on federal release. His abused body was discovered a few days later.

The police will tell you that the first 24 hours are crucial in any child abduction case. The Ontario sex offender registry enables the police to do the following: to quickly identify known pedophiles, rapists and other sex offenders living in the area; to interview and eliminate suspects during the critical early hours of an investigation; and to narrow the field when searching for the abductor.

Christopher's father, Jim Stephenson, is convinced that had a sex offender registry been in place at the time his son was taken, there would have been a much different outcome, and we will all recall that Mr. Stephenson was with us upon the introduction of this bill in the House the other day. He had said so in Ottawa two years ago at a House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

In December 2004, the federal government proclaimed legislation which created a national sex offender registry. This government has always supported the implementation of a national sex offender registry. Recently, the federal government passed legislation amending the national sex offender registry. Many of the amendments were changes advocated by the Ontario government, and we are pleased that our advocacy has been successful. We continue to work with federal officials to further enhance the registry to make it a more valuable investigative tool for police services.

One significant advantage of having a national registry is that Ontario's police services can keep track of an offender who has left the province. Still, there are enough differences in the provincial and federal approaches to the registry to make it necessary to maintain a provincial system. For example, the Ontario registry can display offender residences within specific proximity to a given location, such as a school. The Ontario registry also provides timely access for all police services in the province, and that is a difference between the federal and provincial registry. You would know that the federal registry deals with only one police service, and that is the OPP. So the OPP, in turn, would deal with our local services. In Ontario, all police services have access to the information on the Ontario registry.

As effective as the Ontario system was, we always consider that there is room for improvement. Any system that fails to keep pace with society's demands or falls behind technology's rapid march forward is a system hurtling toward obscurity. That is why, in 2008, this government amended Christopher's Law to enhance the effectiveness of the Ontario sex offender registry. As a result of these amendments, all those serving an intermittent sentence must register within 15 days of conviction; all those who are released on bail pending an appeal must register within 15 days of release; police services must notify the Ontario sex offender registry if they receive notification from a mental health facility that a person who is not criminally responsible in relation to a sex of-

fence is being released from a facility unsupervised; and provincial correctional facilities must notify the Ontario sex offender registry of all sex offenders released from a correctional facility on an unescorted temporary pass within 24 hours before the release.

Together, these amendments obliged more offenders to register and, in some cases, register sooner so that police and the registry have an accurate account of all sex offenders in the community at any given time. Ontario happens to have a compliance rate of over 97%.

As Ontario was strengthening the province's own sex offender registry, the federal government was reviewing the national registry. In 2009, MPs in Ottawa launched a parliamentary review of the national sex offender registry, and on December 9, 2010, a federal act that will amend the legislation that established the national registry received royal assent.

0910

Once proclaimed, the amended legislation will create differences between the national and Ontario registries that this government wishes to address with proposed amendments to Christopher's Law, which will be changed in such a way as to synchronize the two laws.

Ontario continues to be the only province to maintain its own sex offender registry. We will stick to this path because we believe it provides us with direct control over the tools that our police services tell us they need to track and monitor convicted sex offenders quickly and effectively. Even with federal enhancements to the national sex offender registry, Ontario's registry will still maintain advantages as an investigative tool over the national registry, as will be clear as the debate continues.

The Ontario sex offender registry provides police with the information they need to help provide protection for persons who may be at risk. A sex offender registry is also an effective tool in preventing such crimes. According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, offenders convicted for failing to register are 50% more likely to reoffend. As Jim Stephenson has said, the sex offender registry reminds a sex offender that somebody is watching. If that isn't preventive enough, I don't know what else can be suggested.

The amendments to be proposed today will better align the Ontario sex offender registry with the national sex offender registry to maintain the prompt, effective sharing of information. It will also maintain the Ontario system's independence, to be a more effective investigative tool and to provide greater protection for Ontario's communities. To review, the amendments we are proposing to Christopher's Law would help align the legislation with the national sex offender registry legislation as amended by Bill S-2.

Members of this House are aware that it was on April 4, 2000, that the Ontario government passed Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 to establish and maintain a registry of sex offenders that police can use proactively for investigative purposes and crime prevention, and that the federal government established a national sex offender registry in 2004. The national registry was similar to Ontario's, though it was less comprehensive. On December 9, 2010, the federal government passed that legislation which we referred to as Bill S-2, which brings the national registry more in line with Ontario's. However, the legislation, as I have pointed out, will create some differences between the national and provincial registries that will be important to resolve.

The sex offender registry is based on a very simple proposition: That is, if police know the whereabouts of a convicted sex offender in the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and can better focus their investigation into actual crimes. That is why Christopher's Law requires offenders convicted of a criteria offence and residing in Ontario to register with their local police service within 15 days after a triggering event such as a release from custody, name change or address change. Where there is no custodial sentence, they must register within 15 days after being convicted of a sex offence or within 15 days of receiving an absolute or conditional discharge for a sex offence when found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder.

Currently, police services in Ontario are responsible for Ontario and national sex offender registrations, but police services in Ontario have direct access only to the Ontario registry to input and search offender information.

Because information captured by the Ontario and national registries is similar, police services in Ontario are only required to submit offender information into the Ontario registry. Information required by the national registry is automatically transmitted from the Ontario registry. However, the national registry will now require Ontario police services to collect additional information that cannot be entered into the Ontario registry because there is no legislative authority to do so. As a result, information that is automatically submitted to the national registry could be incomplete.

When Bill S-2 is actually proclaimed, there will be differences between the Ontario and national registries in the following areas—and this, essentially, is why this legislation is before this House.

First, reporting obligations: S-2 requires offenders to register within seven days, while the present Ontario legislation requires registration within 15 days. Offenders convicted outside of Canada are another situation: The federal registry will require registration of offenders convicted outside of Canada while the Ontario legislation, at the present time, does not.

There are also pardon provisions which would be different. The national registry will maintain the records of registered offenders who receive a pardon under the Criminal Records Act. Information pertaining to all pardoned offenders must be removed at the present time from the Ontario registry.

The federal legislation will also require the reporting of certain volunteer and employment information, while Christopher's Law does not now require this.

The legislative amendments we are proposing would ensure consistency between the registries. Consistency is

critical to the effectiveness of the registries, both national and provincial. It will help ensure that more offenders of interest are identified by an Ontario registry search during time-sensitive investigations. As members are well aware, time is of the essence in all of these investigations.

Having different Ontario and national registry reporting periods could increase the workload for Ontario police services. They would have to manually register offenders in Ontario to the national registry and confirm that offenders are fulfilling their national and Ontario reporting obligations if the registries happen to be inconsistent. The process of manual uploading of information from local police to the OPP, the only Ontario police service with direct access to the national registry, and from the OPP to the national registry could take up to four weeks, much too long for time-sensitive investigations. This bill will ensure that Ontario continues to provide offender information to the national registry electronically and in real time.

Furthermore, there are differences in the time allowed for offenders to report to the Ontario registry and the national registry. Offenders may fail to differentiate the Ontario and national reporting requirements, resulting in potential criminal charges for offenders who mistakenly believe they have 15 days to report to the national registry.

Including sex offenders in the Ontario registry who have been convicted of a sex crime outside of Canada will help ensure that more offenders of interest are identified by an Ontario registry search.

The bill proposes to address these issues in the following ways:

Section 1 of the bill would add two new clauses to the definition of "sex offence" in section 1 of the act. New clauses (b.2) and (b.3) would result in offences which were committed outside of Canada being included in the definition if the person who committed the offence is required to report to the federal sex offender registry, pursuant to an obligation under either section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code or section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

0920

Section 2 of the bill would amend section 3 of the act to remove the 15-day reporting timelines and would provide for the timelines to be prescribed by regulation. The section would be further amended by adding two clauses, (e.1) and (e.2), which would require offenders who are subject to a federal sex offender registry reporting obligation pursuant to section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code or section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act to report to the Ontario registry within the time prescribed in the regulation.

Section 3 of the bill would amend section 7 of the act to remove the 15-day reporting timelines and have the timelines prescribed by regulation.

Section 3 of the bill also contains transition provisions which would stipulate that if the events that trigger a reporting obligation in subsection 7(2) of the act occur before the bill comes into force, the old reporting obligation provisions would apply, and if such events occur on or after the day the bill comes into force, the new reporting obligation provisions would apply.

Section 4 of the bill would amend section 8 of the act to state that it applies to persons who become subject to an obligation to report to the national sex offender registry pursuant to section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code on or after the day this bill comes into force. It goes on to state that the duration of the reporting obligation under the act is for the duration of that federal reporting obligation.

Section 4 of the bill would further amend section 8 of the act to state that it applies to persons who become subject to an obligation to report to the national sex offender registry pursuant to section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act on or after the day this bill comes into force. It goes on to state that the duration of the reporting obligation under the act is for the duration of that federal reporting obligation.

Section 5 of the bill would repeal subsection 9(3) of the act. Under that subsection, the ministry is required to remove all of an offender's information from the registry if the offender receives a pardon for all of the sex offences that triggered a reporting obligation.

Section 6 of the bill would add a new section to the act, section 9.1, which would require the ministry to remove all of an offender's information from the registry if the offender receives a free pardon for all of the sex offences that triggered a reporting obligation.

Section 7 of the bill would add a new regulation-making power to section 14 of the act allowing for regulations to be made in relation to the various timelines for reporting set out in subsections 3(1) and 7(2) of the act.

Even with the proclamation of Bill S-2, Ontario's registry will maintain the following advantages over the national registry:

—It is accessible by every police service in Ontario, whereas the national registry is only accessible by the OPP at their general headquarters in Orillia—I'm going to make reference to the general headquarters in a moment. As a result, local police services have to contact the OPP to conduct national registry searches.

—It allows police to perform searches that display the offender residences within a specific proximity to a given location, such as a school; the national registry does not have this capability.

—The provincial registry maintains historical and most recent photographs of offenders; the national registry maintains only the most recent photograph. Ontario's registry is routinely checked by police services in the course of their investigations.

—Ontario's sex offender registry has a compliance rate of more than 97%, one of the highest compliance rates of all sex offender registries in operation, including registries in the United States.

Christopher's Law is an important piece of legislation. It is based on a very simple proposition; that is, if police know the whereabouts of all convicted sex offenders in

the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and can better focus their investigations. The amendments proposed in this bill would, if adopted by this House, maintain smooth and efficient sharing of information between local police services and both registries, and more closely align the Ontario sex offender registry with the national registry.

I made reference to the fact that at the headquarters of the Ontario Provincial Police in Orillia, there are many services that are available. Upon touring that particular facility in my capacity as Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, one of the areas that was pointed out to me, and one which was of particular interest, was the kind of sophisticated equipment that the OPP has and the well-trained and -educated people whom the OPP happens to have as part of its operation and who deal with the sex offender registry. The individuals who are involved in this operation, whether they are individuals who serve in local or regional police services or whether they are at the national or provincial level—in other words, the RCMP at the national level or the Ontario Provincial Police, in our case, at the provincial level—well, I'll tell you that one of the most difficult jobs that a person can have in the field of policing is the job of identifying child pornography and the abuse of children through the making and showing of that child pornography. The dedicated people who deal with these matters are to be commended by all citizens of the province of Ontario.

It has to be particularly difficult to have the job of viewing, on a daily basis, literally thousands of photographs and information that would come available to our individuals who are assigned to this task or volunteer for this task as part of their duties in police services across our province and our country. When you see them interviewed on television, hear them on the radio or see them quoted in the newspapers or magazines, you will note that almost invariably, they talk about how difficult this is, particularly if they have children of their own, particularly younger children of their own, grandchildren or great-grandchildren. It is particularly difficult because obviously they can envision the possibility that their children might have, if it were not for fate or other circumstances, been caught in this kind of situation.

I think there's also a recognition that young children are vulnerable. They require the protection of all citizens. So, for instance, when computers are turned in for the purpose of repair and maintenance, or perhaps are being disposed of, those who happen to come upon child pornography within those computers and who take the time to notify police authorities are, again, doing something for which they are to be commended. They are assisting in trying to prevent something which has now become, because of computerization and because of the Internet, much more of an international activity than would have been the case in the past.

0930

Previously, people would have to exchange films or tapes or photographs, and they would have to perhaps do it through the mail or through personal contact. Today, it is much easier because of the Internet, and that means even more children are vulnerable, keeping in mind that those who take the time to view child pornography are, in fact, contributing to the problem. While they may not have been the people who have produced it, they are enabling those who have produced it to have a market.

I think there's a general disgust in our society when we find that people who are in a very vulnerable position, our young children, are placed in this circumstance. So you should know, members of the House—I think most probably do—and people of the province, that our police services are vigilant. They have been given, over the years, by successive governments, more tools to deal with this problem. But police services across the country will tell you, whether it's a national, a provincial or a local police service, that those who break the law utilize new and different tools to do so. It means police have to have, first of all, the training and education to deal with this situation, and they are acquiring that. Some are now international experts who share information on how to deal with these problems; on an international basis, they share that information. Also, you need the latest equipment available to be able to track child pornography.

Our police services who looked for this tool some years ago, when this Legislature passed its bill unanimously—and it's interesting to note, when I say "unanimously," that not everything in this House passes unanimously. There are philosophical differences, there are partisan differences and there are differences in individual thoughts about pieces of legislation and issues that come before this House. Where you find a consensus is on issues of this kind. I think it speaks well of all members of the Legislature that, in dealing with matters of this kind, we are together in trying to find the better tool, each and every time, for our police services to be able to carry out their individual responsibilities.

I think we recognize as well that when we have federal legislation and provincial legislation, we want to ensure as much as possible that they align with one another to avoid confusion. This bill and this kind of legislation is not a contest between one government and another government. Both governments have a similar goal. Some are in a more advantageous position, as we are provincially, for our local police services to access the OPP information; that's exceedingly important. But as much as possible, we want to ensure that the two laws align, and that is why this legislation is being brought forward.

The opportunity was provided to the opposition parties—as is, I think, quite common in the House—to be able to receive a briefing or for their staffs to receive a briefing on the legislation coming forward. I have found, in my experience in this House, that the viewpoints of all members are very helpful. Sometimes they confirm a government position; sometimes they do not. They may have other thoughts that may be contrary to a government position, or in some cases they may want to add to or change in a minor way a bill to make it better.

But I think, overall, the goal that we are looking for in this House is the alignment of the two bills. I don't want

to pre-empt what might happen, but my guess would be that the more we would think of amending this bill, the more challenging it becomes then to see it as aligned with the federal bill.

However, I know that will not prevent some of my colleagues from offering thoughts in this direction, and of course I have the greatest respect particularly for those who are the official critics in those areas, because they assume a certain expertise in a field, and all members of the House who bring their own experiences.

I think all of us, when we saw Christopher Stephenson's father in the House, were reminded of one instance of one family that was affected by this, and Mr. Stephenson has to live this over and over again. I want to commend, him because it has to be most difficult every time a piece of legislation of this kind comes forward, every time there's a reporting of a crime and every time there's a circumstance that would bring to his attention his son and the experience his son went through. His son, by the way, wrote some very compelling poems as a youngster that Mr. Stephenson has been kind enough to share with me. I know that when he comes to this House, he brings a presence which is very positive in its contribution, and I know that he has developed an expertise in legislation of this kind because of the circumstances that have been created by the tragedy that affected his family.

If we think of it, there are many Mr. Stephensons and Mrs. Stephensons across this province who have encountered this circumstance, and it's heartening to know that we, as legislators, can make a difference. There are those who, in their commentary, will say, "The elected members of a Legislature or a government really don't make much difference in our lives," and in some cases they may look and find some evidence that that is the case.

In the case of this particular piece of legislation and its predecessors, we have seen that members of this Legislature are echoing what they have heard in their communities and are taking to heart what individuals who have experienced the horror of the crimes of the nature of that which fell upon Christopher Stephenson have said, and that we are able to respond in a constructive and positive fashion to try to reduce the risk of this ever happening again.

So to my colleagues in the House, I recommend—and they will choose to do as they please; that is the nature of this House. But I would strongly recommend that we pass this legislation. I think you will find that the federal government—or the federal Parliament, I should say, not just the federal government, which has passed its legislation—would say that it is advantageous for the Ontario Legislature to have taken this action if, indeed, it chooses to do so.

I want to also note that in subsequent debate, Mr. Zimmer will be involved very much in the carriage of this bill. Mr. Zimmer has worked with opposition critics exceedingly well as a member of the legal profession and as a person who—again, as with all of us, the member for Willowdale has an interest in matters that relate to legal situations which confront this House. I know that he has worked well with his colleagues on the other side of the House in dealing with various pieces of legislation.

So I look forward with anticipation to the debate as it carries on. I know that there will be a lead that will take place by the Progressive Conservative Party, which will have its opportunity to provide its views on this legislation, and then by the New Democratic Party. I know that all of us will look forward not only to the leads but, perhaps, to the other contributions that are made. I would be very surprised if my friend from Welland—as well as others, but my friend from Welland always says this—would not anticipate and look forward to some time in committee, because he always says that. So I simply anticipate that he says that.

Sometimes matters can be resolved completely within the House, and committee is not necessary. That is rarely the case. I think certainly our government has endeavoured to send things to committee. It's not always as long or as extensive as my friends in opposition might like from time to time, but we have recognized the importance of that where the House deems that to be important.

So with those remarks, I would move the adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Thank you.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business this morning, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. With that, this House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0941 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to welcome a group of Sheridan College journalism and media arts students who are in the press gallery today and will be in the Speaker's gallery as well, from Sheridan in Oakville. It's a pleasure to welcome them.

From my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome Mary Jane and Jerry Collins, seated in the Speaker's gallery. Mary Jane was the greatest grade 6 teacher ever in the history of Edward Street school. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I would like to introduce a former member of the Legislature, the former member from Mississauga South, Tim Peterson.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yes, we do welcome the honourable member who represented Mississauga South in the 38th Parliament.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to give the pages an opportunity to prepare for introduction, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the second session of the 39th Parliament: Kiruthika Baskaran, Windsor West; Madelaine Brown, Brant; Grace Conroy, Prince Edward–Hastings; Christopher DeGuzman, Mississauga East–Cooksville; Fatemah Ebrahim, Thornhill; Cherechi Emenogu, Mississauga–Brampton South; Logan Emiry, Algoma–Manitoulin; Jia Jia Ho, Willowdale; Devon Jones, Don Valley East; Daniel Mateus, St. Catharines; Riley McPhail, York–Simcoe; Sydney O'Brien, Halton; Travis Poland, Sarnia–Lambton; Emma Redfearn, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; Gemma Ricker, Haldimand–Norfolk; Devan Scholefield, Etobicoke–Lakeshore; Rafeh Shahzad, Brampton West; Ciaran Thomas, St. Paul's; Jimmy Zhou, Mississauga–Erindale; and Leighton Zink, Kitchener–Waterloo. Welcome to our pages.

Please reassemble.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: The question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, do you still have confidence in the bloated hydro bureaucracy known as the Ontario Power Authority?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can understand why the Tories, yesterday and today, want to talk about the Ontario Power Authority. It's an organization—I think that they don't support the work that this organization does. They don't support the efforts that this organization is making to help get us out of coal. They don't support the efforts that this organization is making to help provide a more reliable energy system across this province. They don't support the work that this organization is doing to create thousands of clean energy jobs across this country.

It's pretty obvious that that party doesn't want to come forward with their energy plan because their energy plan would kill the thousands of jobs that we're creating in our clean energy economy. Their energy plan would blunt our efforts to get out of dirty coal by 2014. Yes, the Ontario Power Authority has an important role to play—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Minister, of course not: No, we do not support the Ontario Power Authority. Minister, we support the hard-working Ontario families and small businesses who are sick and tired of getting higher and higher hydro bills because of the expensive mess you've made in our system.

When Premier McGuinty first announced the Ontario Power Authority in 2004, your government said, "There's been a misconception that this is somehow going to be a massive bureaucracy." Well, since then, the OPA bureaucracy has ballooned from 15 to 300 employees. Salaries and expenses have grown by a staggering 465%. Why don't you do the right thing and scrap your bloated hydro bureaucracy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What the Ontario Power Authority and all of our energy agencies here in this province are busy doing is turning around the ugly legacy that that Leader of the Opposition left behind when it comes to energy in this province. That means we're working very hard to create more power generation in this province to ensure that we have enough power to reliably provide for the needs of Ontario families—something they did not do. That's why we're working very hard to get out of dirty coal by 2014, to ensure that we can provide a healthier future for our kids and grandkids—something that that party doesn't seem to care about, something that that party doesn't support. We're also creating thousands of clean energy jobs.

Why does that leader not come forward with his energy plan to tell Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Clearly, the minister embraces his bloated Ontario Power Authority bureaucracy. Minister, we would take a very different view. We would close the doors on the OPA and pass on the savings to hard-pressed Ontario families.

You said this would not be a massive bureaucracy, but the costs have grown by 465%. I guess that is simply standard, everyday bloat when it comes to the McGuinty government. We think they're doing a poor job.

In fact, if anything, we think the OPA should be called the Ontario propaganda authority for spending millions and millions of dollars in ads to promote the McGuinty government. The OPA played a role in their backtrack seat-savers in Oakville and the wind turbine backtrack to save your own seat.

Minister, why don't you do the right thing? Scrap this wasteful bureaucracy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The last person we are going to take advice from when it comes to accountability is that Leader of the Opposition. He sat in the cabinet that allowed Hydro One to buy a yacht. I think they named it Defiant. He sat in the cabinet that allowed the Hydro One CEO, Eleanor Clitheroe, to earn $2.2 million a year, half as much as Hydro One is currently involved in with regard to compensation in terms of executive compensation.

The fact of the matter is that the Ontario Power Authority is engaged in improving our conservation programs—something that that party doesn't support—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please.

I'm finding it extremely difficult. There are a number of ministers who are shouting down their own colleague, who is trying to answer a question. I would just remind

the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Finance of the importance of allowing their colleague to answer.

Continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The reason this party doesn't support the work of the Ontario Power Authority is that they don't support conservation, and that's an initiative that the Ontario Power Authority is working on. They don't support energy planning. That's why they don't want to come forward to Ontario families with their plan: because they don't have one—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1040

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Energy: We simply do not support the McGuinty government waste that is driving up hydro bills for Ontario families. You don't seem to get that. In fact, when the Premier created the OPA, which you fully embrace, he said that this so-called transitional agency "shouldn't add to the cost of the" hydro "bill." We're as likely to believe that as his other zinger: that smart meters are going to save people money.

Nobody believes it, Minister. The jig is up. Look at the record of waste at the OPA: $1 billion, potentially, for your flip-flop and backtrack on the Oakville gas plant; a $1-billion tab for your smart meter tax machines that are driving up bills; and a $1-billion tab to pay Quebec and the US to take excess hydro. This is a great example of McGuinty waste that has to go. Minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This Leader of the Opposition has been in his position for over 630 days. Not one of those days has he come forward to Ontario families with his plans for energy.

This is what their campaign director, Mark Spiro, had to say: "The only people who are demanding our policy at the moment in a booklet form, where it's simple"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew is speaking so loudly, he can't even hear me calling him to order.

Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Their campaign director had this to say: "The only people who are demanding our policy at the moment in a booklet form, where it's simple and easy and they don't have to do any work, (are journalists)." Then he went on to say that journalists need details of party policy documented because they are otherwise too lazy to discover them.

You're hiding your plan from the journalists around Queen's Park. You're hiding your plan from Ontario families. You're even hiding your plan from your own—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, this is what you just do not understand: Hydro bills are sitting there on the kitchen table for days and days on end. The hydro bill has now become "the" bill in the province of Ontario because it is skyrocketing from the McGuinty government waste and expensive energy experiments.

Look at some of the salaries you're paying at the OPA as well, while families struggle: $120,000 a year for an office manager; over $200,000 a year for something called an "executive advisor"; almost $600,000 a year for the CEO. We have seen boondoggle after boondoggle after boondoggle; $1 billion wasted on smart meter tax machines that are driving up the bills.

Premier McGuinty used to be against this stuff. He has changed. Close down this wasteful bureaucracy and pass on the savings to families through their hydro bills.

Hon. Brad Duguid: After over 630 days as Leader of the Opposition, I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that he take the advice of his energy critic, because this is what he had to say: "Ontario needs an energy plan and the leadership to see it through. Not having a ... plan is just wasting precious time." I say to the Leader of the Opposition: Stop wasting the precious time of this Legislature. Stop wasting the precious time of Ontario families. Let them know where you stand.

There may be reasons why you don't want to do that. Maybe it's because you don't support our clean energy benefit that's taking 10% off their bills. Maybe it's because you don't support the thousands of clean energy jobs we're creating in communities right across this province. Maybe it's because you want to stay with dirty coal and not be out of coal by 2014. But Ontario families deserve to know where you stand. Why are you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, I told you where we stand. We would close the doors on your bloated OPA hydro bureaucracy and pass the savings on to Ontario families. Why don't you get that?

I know it's hard for you to admit that you made a grievous error. This thing has been a massive, wasteful bureaucracy, and their screw-ups are as long as the day. They screwed up on the smart meter tax machines; they're subsidizing exports to Quebec and New York state to the tune of $1 billion. Let's get this straight: While Ontario families are paying more for their hydro, you're subsidizing customers in Quebec and New York state? Why is it that families would have to move across the border into Buffalo to find any kind of savings from the McGuinty government?

This has been a big mistake. It has driven up bills. It's not too late: Close down this wasteful bureaucracy and pass the money on to Ontario families.

Hon. Brad Duguid: This comes from a Leader of the Opposition who, in his last two years in office when he served in cabinet, had us import power because we weren't producing enough, and that cost Ontario ratepayers $1 billion in their last two years. What does he know about managing an energy system? We're not

really sure, because he won't tell Ontario families what his plan is.

What about Ontario farmers? I think they deserve to know what your plan is because you have members in your caucus who are going around this province telling Ontario farmers that you're going to kill the energy policies that are helping those farmers out, that are helping those farmers engage in our clean energy economy, that are helping to provide up to $10,000 for Ontario farmers.

Come clean with Ontario farmers. Come clean with Ontario families. Come clean with Ontario businesses—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Stop the clock.

One of the reasons that it's important to speak through the Chair is that when the Speaker does rise, you will see that he has risen, and that is your signal to sit down. I would just remind the honourable member that he needs to keep an eye on the Speaker.

New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. From Windsor to Thunder Bay, there's a lot of economic uncertainty out there and lots of anxiety. People are concerned about finding a job, about paying skyrocketing hydro bills, soaring gasoline prices and, now, higher costs for food. Will next week's budget actually give people a break?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What working families are looking for is better education and health care; they're looking for a clean, reliable system of energy; and they're looking for a range of opportunities for their children and their parents that will build on a quality of life that is second to none in the world right here in Ontario.

The policies we will lay out in the budget are designed to recognize the fact that our economy is turning the corner, and what we have an obligation to do is to work with all families to build a better future for Ontarians, to ensure that, as we get the budget back to balance, there are more new jobs, better health care and better education for all Ontarians.

I look forward to presenting the budget next week to lay out a clear plan for a better future for our children and grandchildren.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Next week's budget needs to focus on family budgets, not corporate budgets. Household debt loads are at historic highs, and the recession has forced many to take lower-paying jobs.

Will the Acting Premier give families a break and take the HST off of home heating bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Families have had a number of breaks from this government. Let's talk about the Ontario child benefit: $1.2 billion for Ontarians of modest incomes. That member and her party voted against it.

Let's talk about the lowest tax rate on the first $37,000 of income in the country in the 2009 budget. It kicked in last year and it reduced taxes on the first $37,000 by almost 20%. That member and her party voted against it.

Let's talk about the Ontario clean energy benefit, which lowers hydro bills, including taxes, by 10%, more than eliminating the HST would from those bills. That member and her party voted against it.

This party helps families. That member and her party vote against them, routinely.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Linda Guyle wrote to me about her utility bill. After explaining all the charges and every single step that she has taken to try to keep costs down, she writes: "It's time to give people a break instead of breaking people!"

Will the Acting Premier help family budgets by taking the HST off home heating bills? Or will he put corporate budgets ahead of families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There is one Ontarian I'd like to hear from later today, and that's Jack Layton. Will he vote for a federal budget that leaves the GST on hydro bills? I think that's an important question. Will he vote for a budget that continues corporate tax cuts? That's an important question that Ontarians want an answer to.

1050

Ontarians also want to know why it is that that leader and her party have voted against every tax credit for senior citizens that this government has brought forward. They have no plan other than to spend money they don't have.

We're going to get back to balance and make important investments in education and health care to build a better future for our children as the economy turns the corner. That's what we're about. We look forward to hearing from our friends opposite.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question is also for the Acting Premier. Like Ontario's budget next week, today's federal budget is expected to contain another round of corporate tax cuts. Does the Acting Premier support Prime Minister Harper's corporate tax giveaways?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Like all Canadians, I anxiously await the budget later this afternoon. I had an opportunity last evening to speak to the federal finance minister. We shared views on a variety of issues.

Canadians are waiting to see if the NDP federally will vote for those corporate tax cuts. It appears as though they're going to. The NDP—and they are one party; I remind them over there that it is one party—said initially they were going to oppose the corporate tax cuts, but that wasn't on the list they gave to the Prime Minister as must-have demands in order to support the government.

The leader of the third party doesn't have a plan other than to spend more money. We are going to make im-

portant investments in education, in health care and in children's services to build a better future as this economy turns the corner. It is about our children and grandchildren, and that's what we're focused on. She'll see what we have to say about all of these issues a week from today, right here.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here are the words that Mr. Ignatieff and other Liberal MPs have used to describe corporate tax cuts: "reckless," "unaffordable," "economically and socially irresponsible" and "not the most effective way to create jobs."

Does the Acting Premier disagree with the position of his federal Liberal counterparts?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we believe in is that, in order to keep jobs in Ontario, we compete against Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

Her plan, her policies, will create jobs in British Columbia, they will create jobs in Alberta, they will create jobs in Saskatchewan, and they will create jobs in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. This government—this party—wants those jobs right here in Ontario.

We have the best workforce. We have the best education system. We have the most productive economy. We have a bright future, and that's what we're about.

We're going to lay out a clear plan that strikes the balance, that says to Ontarians, "As this economy turns the corner, our children and grandchildren will have a better future because one party in this House has a clear vision and is prepared to enunciate it to the people of Ontario."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Family budgets need help right now. Corporate tax cuts won't help people pay their bills. Our manufacturing and forestry sectors are struggling, and corporate tax cuts will not help them either—unless, of course, they happen to be turning a profit.

People want to see jobs and help with the growing cost of living. Why is the Acting Premier making life more expensive for families and offering tax giveaways to corporations that are laying people off?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario have needed help over the last two years, and do you know what? When we cut their taxes, she voted against it. When we created the seniors' energy and property tax credit and then doubled it, she voted against it. When we created the Ontario clean energy benefit to lower people's energy bills by 10%, she and her party voted against it.

I would like to remind her of what her colleague from Beaches–East York had to say last week: "I mean, the tax burden has gone down on everyone, in spite of what people think. You know, taxes have gone down, literally in all income groups."

Interjection: Who said that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member for Beaches–East York said that. He was right. Why did you vote against every initiative designed to help families across this province? No plan, no idea, no future; better future, better plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: We'll give the Minister of Finance a break. He's out of air. I'll pass this one to the Minister of Energy.

In May 2004, the rationale the McGuinty Liberals gave to Ontario families for creating the Ontario Power Authority was that the agency would produce a stable price for hydro, but the only thing it has produced is one hydro rate increase after another. Ontario families have already seen their bills go up by 75%—100% if you're using a smart meter—and you increased them by at least another 46%.

What makes you keep an agency around when it has failed so miserably in one of its stated mandates, and that's to keep the hydro bill down? Why would you keep it around?

Hon. Brad Duguid: If that member was really concerned about the budgets of Ontario families, why would you not have supported our clean energy benefit that's taken 10% off their bills? Why did you vote against that? Ontario families, farmers and small businesses deserve that 10% off their bills. You voted against that.

If that member really cares about Ontario families, why would he not want to ensure that we have cleaner air for our kids by getting rid of dirty coal by 2014? Why are you and your colleagues still in favour of letting coal churn out across this province, continuing to pollute our air and impacting the health of ourselves and our kids?

If you really cared about Ontario families, how can you stand up today and not support the efforts that we're making to clean our air, to create jobs and to build a reliable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier McGuinty used to complain about renovations to a boardroom at hydro offices being added to the bills at a time when rates were going up by 30%. But you see, that was before he increased them by 75%; 100% if you have a smart meter installed, a smart tax machine. It was before he planned to increase them by another 46%, and it was before—and I love this one; this is great—the OPA was in the process of hiring a hospitality service executive, until the Ontario PC caucus caught them in the act.

Premier McGuinty has taken his eye off the ball. He has made a mess of Ontario's electricity system, and consumers are paying. Why won't you give consumers and Ontario families the relief and spare them from paying any more for your bloated OPA—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This comes from the PC Party, a party that, when they had control of Hydro One, bought a

yacht and they named it Defiant; a party that had CEO Eleanor Clitheroe making double what the CEO today makes at Hydro One. Unbelievably, they removed Hydro One and OPG from being subject to freedom of information. What did they have to hide?

There's a list this long of Tory operatives who benefited in those days. Those days are gone. We've cleaned up the Tory mess that they left behind. Our organizations are accountable; they're doing important work and building a clean, reliable and modern energy system, something they don't support. They don't want to talk about their plan today. They haven't wanted to talk about their plan since their leader became—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Public hearings on plans for a new nuclear plant at Darlington began yesterday. Is the Ministry of Energy fully participating in the public hearings and open to answering all questions that concerned community members may have?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've been in touch with my federal colleagues on this matter and I've written, as the Premier indicated to the House yesterday, to my federal colleagues, encouraging them to ensure that any lessons learned from the Japanese experience are applied in this federal environmental assessment process.

This federal environmental assessment process is the highest level of environmental assessment in the country. The panel is indeed meeting and holding open public consultations. They are hearing from anybody who wants to speak to them. I think it's an important part of the accountability, as we move forward with the purchase of two new nuclear units, that we allow the federal government to work through this process.

1100

We welcome input from the member opposite. We welcome input from all families and people in Ontario, and all organizations. Certainly, that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister may or may not welcome input, but he certainly doesn't welcome questions.

On January 13, 2011, Peter Landmann, counsel for the Ministry of Energy, wrote to the panel confirming special treatment for the ministry. This letter indicates that community members and groups can only ask questions to the Ministry of Energy "with the consent of" the ministry, and that "no cross-examination ... will be permitted."

Why is the Ministry of Energy actively seeking to avoid questions from concerned community members and thus undermining those public hearings?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We don't avoid questions from anybody, and I think I'm up on my feet enough in this Legislature that the member would know that.

But what I would say is this: We take very seriously the need to ensure that we continue to learn from the experiences of others around the world, but I think the member would want to be on his feet on a continual basis to reassure his constituents that here in Ontario our nuclear units are safe. They continue to be safe. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission oversees that and ensures that that takes place.

The hearings that are ongoing are a very important part of our process. This is the beginning of a very long process that's going to take place. There's a number of approvals that will be necessary. There will be a lot of time for consideration of all the issues that are involved here, but the key is that our units are safe today and our units will be safe in the future.

WATER SUPPLY

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, Ontario families know a sustainable water source is vital to our well-being and our way of life. A great deal of the world's fresh water is found right here in our backyard in the Great Lakes. A key plank of the Open Ontario act is to ensure that Ontario becomes a centre of excellence in developing technology for clean water. Some residents in my riding want to make sure that any economic development does not come at the expense of this valuable resource.

My question is simple: Will the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act actually improve water conservation in Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. On this side of the House, we don't believe that it's a question of the economy versus the environment, but it's a question of finding the balance between the economy and the environment. I'd like to say today, on World Water Day, how important it is that we on this planet find that balance. That's why right around the world we are celebrating World Water Day.

Let me assure Ontarians of one thing: When it comes to our Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, it's about exporting our clean water technology, not about exporting our precious resource, water. We live in a world that is increasingly thirsty. There are estimates that within 15 years, 1.8 billion people on this planet will not have a source of safe drinking water, so we see tremendous opportunity here in the province of Ontario to export that technology so that people around the world can have that most precious resource which all life depends on, which is water.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: It is estimated that the global market for water technology is more than $400 billion US per year and doubling every five to six years. In the next 20 years, worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40% greater than current supply. There are companies throughout Ontario that have expertise in water technologies and would like the support of your ministry to ensure they have the resources to turn into global com-

panies. By your ministry supporting these companies, we will be seeing more knowledge-based jobs for Ontarians.

Furthermore, by helping build expertise in Ontario, we will be able to export our technologies to help other countries conserve water. Will the minister tell us what supports there will be for these high-growth water technology companies in my riding?

Hon. John Wilkinson: To the Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Just weeks ago, thanks to the good efforts of the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I met with delegations from the cities of Kawartha Lakes and Peterborough and was impressed by their historic and ongoing efforts to build water technology and advance it.

As members may know, at Fleming College, Dr. Brent Wootton of the Centre for Alternative Wastewater Treatment is helping Canadian companies become more competitive by extracting the value from what was previously considered waste water.

Good news travels fast, and in London, Ontario, Trojan has just added 119 jobs to Ontario—in one of our largest expansions—my ministry will be launching WaterTAP, an industry-led association to accelerate water development.

This is a critically growing area. Right now, Ontario is home to 2,800—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Acting Premier: Yesterday, Premier McGuinty said that parents who were denied support because they hadn't witnessed the murder of their children can expect changes to his broken victims-of-crime program, but Ontario families have heard it all before from this Premier.

In 2006, he said he would fix the problem after the Ombudsman described how Mr. Aurelio Almeida was treated like a con artist for seeking support following the rape and murder of his five-year-old daughter. Eva-Marie Devine had to choose between food and burying her murdered daughter. In 2008, the Premier said he would fix the problem after getting advice from the Honourable Roy McMurtry.

It's 2011 and nothing's changed, not even your briefing notes. So I say to the Acting Premier: Can you tell grieving families why they should believe a Premier who broke his promise to them twice already?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: On behalf of the Attorney General, I say that you'll recall the answers of the Attorney General and the Premier in the House indicating clearly that a review of this matter was taking place.

I think what's important, and the member would agree with me, is to state how much money has been allocated in this regard. Since 2003, the Ministry of the Attorney General has provided $757.6 million on vital services for victims of crime. In 2010-11, there has been an allocation of an additional—I say "an additional"—$120 million. This is almost double the amount that was allocated in 2002-03, the last year of the previous government. So we've seen a significant and substantial increase—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, another review isn't needed. You went out and got advice twice already on Premier McGuinty's broken victim compensation program, even though there's no mystery to what the problem is or how to fix it: Take the surplus you're sitting on in the victims' fund and release it to victims and law enforcement agencies; change the definition of "victim" so it includes parents, whether or not they witnessed the crimes committed against their children; and add victim compensation representation to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Despite having already received advice from both the Ombudsman and the Honourable Roy McMurtry, you're stonewalling victims by asking the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for yet a third opinion.

Minister, what is Premier McGuinty's timeline for action that actually gives relief to Ontario families who are victims of crime?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Lanark interjects. I'm worried about what's happening in eastern Ontario, about what the member for Lanark is trying to do to the member for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the minister to stay on the point of the question, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm being interrupted by the member for Lanark and I was trying to help the member for Mississippi Mills.

May I say to the member that I know comparisons are useful because it's a clear indication of whether people are talking the talk or walking the walk. I want to indicate to him—and I'm not being critical of the past—that the present government has allocated more than three times as much from the victims' justice fund as the previous Conservative government did. The Premier is asking for immediate action in this regard, as is the Attorney General. We believe it is a serious situation and we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Acting Premier. Can the Acting Premier tell this House why 400,000 Ontarians are forced to rely on food banks?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government of Ontario, working with other governments, has constructed an anti-

poverty strategy where, for the first time, not only do we measure the challenges to poverty, we are setting targets for better outcomes. There is always more to do on this front. As long as one Ontario family has to turn to a food bank, that's too many.

We will continue to build on the progress we have made in terms of enhancements to various programs and services that are designed to help those of more modest means, and we look forward, as the economy improves—and it is improving—to all Ontarians sharing in the benefits of a faster-growing economy with more jobs, better outcomes and better opportunities for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

1110

Mr. Michael Prue: The Ontario food bank association report shows, first, that food bank usage has increased in Ontario by 28% since 2008, which is, coincidently, the same year that this government announced its poverty reduction strategy. Ontario ranks third-highest for food bank usage in all of Canada.

This is the government strategy. This is the government legacy. This is the government poverty production plan—that's what it is: It's a poverty production plan. Can you tell us again what a good job you are doing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd rather rely on the food banks themselves to tell you the job we're doing. They supported our tax plan for jobs and growth because they recognized that it was in fact a plan about lowering the tax burden on the most vulnerable in this society. It was about creating opportunity. That's why groups like the Daily Bread Food Bank and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives supported this initiative as being extremely important for relieving poverty in this province.

We have laid out a plan. It's been endorsed by those food banks. It's taken 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls. It's lowered taxes for the lowest-income earners in Ontario.

That member and his party are trying to have it both ways. They vote against it, offer nothing substantive in return. This government has a plan and a policy that's working for all Ontarians.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

I'm very concerned with a recent poll released by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations and the Canadian Federation of Students on university education over the last eight years. I'm very discouraged to see that the poll results found that nearly half of respondents believe the quality of post-secondary education has stayed the same since 2003, and only 8% said that education had improved. The poll also indicates that respondents think that post-secondary education will be a top priority in the coming election.

As we all know, a post-secondary education has become essential for Ontarians to compete in our knowledge-based economy. Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that post-secondary education remains a top priority for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased to comment on the poll, which asked people to compare our record with the record of the previous government. I'd like to remind members of the House about the record of the previous government—the fact that they cut over $400 million from our colleges and universities; the fact that they allowed tuition to increase by 67%; and they cut student financial aid by 40%.

We came to office, and by investing billions of dollars into the system, I'm very pleased to say that we have the highest post-secondary attainment rate in the western world here in Ontario. On the university front, we have the highest participation rate. We have one of the most generous financial aid systems in the country, the lowest default rate on student loans and an increased graduation rate in both our colleges and universities.

In seven years, I'm—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Students know they need to obtain a good education in order to compete in today's high-skills economy. However, there are still many people who feel that post-secondary institutions have become too expensive.

I've heard concerns from the University of Guelph about the cost for students from middle-income families, and students who have never had a family member at university may not know what assistance is available. My fear is that potential students will be discouraged from applying to our universities because they don't think they can afford it, and the debt they could accumulate might be too high.

I know Ontario offers some of the best universities and colleges in the country; I've got one in Guelph. What is the government doing to limit tuition fees and keep post-secondary education affordable?

Hon. John Milloy: As I mentioned, independent experts have told us that we have one of the most generous student financial aid systems in the country. Through the Reaching Higher plan, we put forward $1.5 billion in additional funding for student aid. We've seen 140,000 more college and university students enter into the system.

Last spring, we announced further changes to OSAP, some $81 million to make it more generous, to allow more students to access it and, at the same time, to bring in measures like the repayment assistance plan, which allows students who have some financial difficulties after graduation to see their loan payments reduced to match their income.

I am very proud of the progress that we've made in terms of student aid in this province, and we can say that no qualified student in this province will ever be denied access to college or university because of financial reasons.

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, last fall, the residents of Shelburne and north Dufferin were promised that a health and wellness centre would be created in Shelburne, offering a broad range of community-based care. Shelburne council, with the support of the county of Dufferin, is currently working on a proposal that would see the health and wellness centre located at the Shelburne closed hospital. Minister, will you consider this proposal from the county of Dufferin?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for this question. What I can tell you is this is an issue that the local health integration network is working on. We of course are committed to improving health care in the area of Shelburne and right across this province.

We've made significant investments at Headwaters. We've increased funding by close to 30%. That's in stark contrast to what the Progressive Conservative Party did when they were in government; they actually cut funding to Headwaters by 4%.

We've also invested over $1 million in reducing wait times for people in the Shelburne area, at Headwaters, and we've seen results. Cataract surgeries have been reduced by 43% and cancer surgery wait times have been reduced by an astonishing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, your answer concerns me greatly. The LHINs have actually directed the new executive director in fact not to speak to the mayor of the town of Shelburne or the county of Dufferin. They are refusing to consider this site.

Minister, the residents in my community would like to see this closed Shelburne site continue to be served and to be used as a community health asset. We're looking for a concrete plan with a time frame for the creation of this health and wellness centre.

The board of Headwaters Health Care Centre has determined that the Shelburne site is surplus to their needs. Subsection 4(4) of the Public Hospitals Act indicates that ministerial—not LHIN—approval is required for the disposition of hospital buildings and land.

Minister, will you—not the LHIN—commit—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member has said, this particular site is no longer used as a hospital. It is a surplus hospital site. The hospital has made the decision and they are working with the municipality to work out what arrangements can be made.

I think it's important to emphasize, though, that this is an issue that needs to be worked out at the local level, and we have never refused a request to approve the sale of any hospital site.

I would recommend that the member opposite continue to work in her community to find a resolution to this.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today is World Water Day. It should be a day to celebrate progress in protecting water. Instead, the Anishinabek Nation and others are launching a campaign to try to stop an imminent threat to the Great Lakes: a proposal by Bruce Power to transport radioactive nuclear steam generators across the Great Lakes system.

Will the McGuinty government finally speak up and oppose this unnecessary risk to a source of drinking water for 40 million people?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've talked about this issue in the past and we've dealt with this issue here. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has held hearings on this particular matter, heard from a number of different stakeholders and, I believe, heard directly from First Nations as well on this. They're the experts on these matters. They determine, indeed, what needs to be done, what's safe and what's not safe in terms of our waterways when it comes to nuclear and the transportation of potentially radioactive material. They've done their job. They've made their decision.

1120

There's still more work to be done because there are other jurisdictions now that are undergoing consideration of this matter. But those public hearings have been held and the Leader of the Opposition had an opportunity to make input and, to the best of my knowledge, she failed to take advantage of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government says it's safe to ship these massive containers, even though radiation levels exceed international standards and there's been no environmental assessment of the plan and environmental groups, mayors and aboriginal communities all oppose the plan.

Why won't the government, on World Water Day, of all days, stand up for our shared waters and finally stop this shipment?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've shared with this Legislature in the past, and I will again as Minister of Energy for the province of Ontario, that certainly I wrote to Bruce Power and I wrote to my federal colleagues urging them to ensure that every last stone was unturned with regard to the consideration of safety on this particular issue.

I've been assured that indeed that is what has taken place. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has done their job as the experts they are in these particular matters.

I also encouraged at that time the Leader of the Opposition to in fact make a deputation and indeed make her views known, but she failed to do that. Those hearings have been held; the decision has been made. There's still work to do in terms of other jurisdictions with regard to this shipment, but the leader had her opportunity and she failed to take advantage of it. I can't help her with that now.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Transports. Cette Assemblée législative sait à quel point il est important que nous, membres du présent gouvernement, trouvions des services d'expression française en Ontario. Depuis l'adoption de la Loi sur les services en français de 1986, notre province a déployé des efforts pour offrir des services d'expression française. En termes de plaques d'immatriculation, notre gouvernement est celui qui a introduit la version française de « Yours to discover »—« Tant à découvrir »—en 2008.

À l'occasion de la Semaine de la francophonie, la ministre aurait-elle l'obligeance de nous fournir une mise à jour sur la manière dont les divers types de plaques d'immatriculation sont disponibles dans les deux langues du Canada?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell ne fait pas erreur. En 2008, nous avons introduit la version française de « Yours to discover », soit « Tant à découvrir. »

Je suis heureuse de signaler que, en date de janvier 2011, environ 5 166 plaques d'immatriculation de véhicules de transport-passagers arborant le slogan en français ont été délivrées.

Nous avons aussi grandement élargi la palette de versions françaises disponibles sur nos plaques anglaises. Par exemple, depuis sa mise en circulation en 2007, nous offrons le slogan graphique en français de la Société canadienne du sang, soit « Donnez du sang ». Le 1er juillet 2010, le ministère a introduit une nouvelle plaque verte pour les véhicules électriques qui est disponible—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Merci, madame la Ministre. Je dois tout d'abord la féliciter, à l'occasion de la Semaine de la francophonie, d'avoir si bien répondu en français, pour la réponse et pour l'amélioration de ces services à la population francophone de l'Ontario.

Un aspect que vous n'avez pas mentionné est la question que j'ai entendue de mes commettants d'expression française. Malgré les pas de géant que nous avons marqués, il semblerait que le slogan en français « Tant à découvrir » ne soit pas disponible sur les plaques d'immatriculation personnalisées.

Est-ce que la ministre peut nous expliquer pourquoi le slogan n'est pas disponible et quelles sont les mesures qu'on prévoit adopter pour s'assurer d'y offrir un accès équitable à notre population d'expression française en Ontario?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Je souhaite remercier le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour sa vigoureuse défense de cet enjeu de taille.

Notre gouvernement est résolu à aménager une collectivité francophone saine et prospère. Nous avons investi des sommes importantes dans des secteurs clés comme l'éducation, la santé et la culture. À titre de gouvernement, nous nous employons à améliorer l'accès aux services du gouvernement provincial en français et la qualité des services, et nous continuerons d'explorer de nouvelles façons de promouvoir la langue et la culture françaises aux niveaux local, national et international.

Mon collègue soulève une question très importante. J'ai demandé au personnel du ministère des Transports de l'Ontario d'explorer des façons d'offrir cet important service en matière de plaques personnalisées—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, last week, I toured the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital to check on the dialysis unit which, as you know, has a waiting list of eight patients. Because of your government's delay in approving the funding, patients now have to travel either to Barrie or Orillia for this life-saving treatment.

While touring the hospital, I learned of an even greater crisis: The hospital is bursting at the seams. Even if you help to eliminate some of the current backlog by approving the funding, if any further patients come along, there will be no room to provide them with dialysis services locally.

The hospital has had a capital expansion application in to your ministry since 2004, but you've ignored them for seven years. Minister, why have you overlooked the needs of patients in southern Georgian Bay who rely on the Collingwood hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am more than happy to talk about what we have done to improve health care infrastructure in this province. The reality is that when we came to office in 2003, we inherited an extraordinary deficit in our hospital infrastructure, so we rolled up our sleeves and we went to work. We have now built 18 brand new hospitals and embarked on major capital projects at 100 more. Our commitment to improving the infrastructure is undeniable, and the evidence is in the hospitals that are opening right across this province.

Is there more to do? Yes, there is more to do. We've made a significant dent in that infrastructure deficit, but there is more to do. We are determined to come back to this House and continue to improve infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, your government had no problem approving a remodel of the CEO's office at the Central West Community Care Access Centre into an executive suite that cost taxpayers $400,000. You have no problem spending money on bureaucracy, but turn to patient care and you're broke.

Patients in Collingwood are lying in the hallway. Administrative offices at CCACs and LHINs have no hemodialysis machines, they don't perform any surgeries and they can't take your blood or repair a broken arm. If you don't act quickly, there will be no additional access to dialysis services in Collingwood.

The hospital needs your approval so they can get going on building a new wing for ambulatory care and dialysis, which would also allow them to expand the emergency room. Minister, when will you be approving the expansion of Collingwood General and Marine Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is simply an astonishing question coming from this particular member of the opposition. This member was the Minister of Health. He was the one who got the hospital restructuring commission rolling. He's the one who's responsible for the closure of 28 hospitals.

Let me look at the record of this particular riding. The Stevenson Memorial Hospital had their budget cut by almost 6%. That hurt families. The General Marine Hospital in Collingwood: They cut almost 10% from the hospital budget there. In stark contrast, we have been investing more and more in hospitals right across this province. At Stevenson Memorial, it's 34% more; in Collingwood, there's a 45% increase in spending. We are committed to continue improving.

They want to cut health care. There is no way you can cut health care and improve services. We are on the side of the patients of this province.

1130

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: My question is for the Acting Premier, and it's very simple: Can the Acting Premier tell this House how many strikes or lockouts are using temporary replacement workers right now?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I can tell the member opposite is that Ontario has enjoyed unprecedented labour stability in the last eight years. What I can tell her is, unlike her party, which unilaterally opened up and stripped collective agreements, that's not something this government has ever done. She forgets the social contract, where they turned on their friends in the labour movement, took their contracts and tore them up, just like that.

This government works co-operatively with labour. This government works co-operatively with business. It is about building a better economy for our children, about better health care and better education and working with labour, because they're an important part of this province's future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: My question was about temporary replacement workers, and the minister couldn't have answered it because the government does not keep track of the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or a lockout.

In my riding, the people at Vale Inco walked the picket line for a year while replacement workers were being used. In Brantford, workers at Engineering Coated Products have been asked to take a huge concession. They went on strike. The company brought in replacement workers. That was two and a half years ago. Those people have been on strike for two and a half years while temporary replacement workers do their work.

The use of replacement workers during strikes and lockouts is growing exponentially in Ontario. It is tearing communities apart. It is prolonging labour disputes. How can the government get a picture of the use of replacement workers when it does not even keep track of it? Is it because they don't care about the health of those communities?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government continues to support collective bargaining, free and open. The labour movement and working Ontarians remember what that member and her party did once they came to office. They asked questions like this for decades before they came to office. What did they do? They opened and stripped every collective agreement, so they have no credibility.

What is important is that we work with labour and we work with business. Our economy is turning the corner, and it's turning a corner to a better future. That better future will be enhanced by the kinds of investments we're making in education and health care, which will build a productive, more healthy economy, will create jobs for our children and their children. It's about working together.

We're proud of our record in working with labour, in working with management. We look forward to that better future for our children and our grandchildren.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, today the Ontario Association of Food Banks released a report called Running on Empty, which calls on Ontario's political parties to make hunger reduction a central priority.

In western Mississauga, the Eden Community Food Bank has served more people through its facilities in Meadowvale since the global economic downturn. The Running on Empty report asserts that, even as our province recovers from the recession, more than 400,000 Ontarians turn to food banks each month.

Minister, Ontarians need to know how our province will aggressively pursue our target of reducing child poverty by 25% within five years. How have Ontario's investments made a difference to those who have been using community food banks in this province?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for the question and his advocacy for his community on this important issue.

I also want to thank the Ontario Association of Food Banks and the anti-hunger advocates in Toronto. This report, released by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, recognizes that, like other jurisdictions, Ontario is recovering from a global economic recession, and that Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, the first in our province's history, set a target to reduce child poverty by 25% by 2013.

Like other jurisdictions, we know that poverty is unacceptable, and we continue to work on that important

goal. Ontarians need to know that the report also recognizes that investments like the Ontario child benefit, full-day kindergarten and seven increases in the minimum wage have made incredibly important progresses—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, the Running on Empty report highlights that the number of children and youth under 18 using food banks has declined since 2000.

In western Mississauga, the local student nutrition program received nearly $2 million to deliver healthy meals and snacks to students across the riding. That means that when I visit students in their classrooms in Meadowvale, Lisgar and Streetsville schools, our kids are focusing on their lessons and are ready to learn. We know that healthy meals and snacks can help children to focus in school and to be ready to learn.

Minister, the NDP has claimed that our government is not doing enough for low-income Ontarians, despite their having voted against the child benefits. Minister, how many kids are benefiting from Ontario's investments in student nutrition?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I recently had the opportunity to attend, with my colleague and seatmate Minister Mitchell, Thorncliffe Park Public School in Don Valley West, where we celebrated the big crunch, and we talked a lot about our student nutrition programs.

I was able to tell those students—and I'm pleased to tell the House today—that 600,000 students are getting healthy breakfasts and snacks in school, thanks to our student nutrition program, and that's working out to 68 million snacks and meals last year. Here in Toronto, the student nutrition program served more than 15.2 million meals to more than 137,000 kids during that time.

Reducing poverty isn't about politics or partisanship. It's about having a plan. It's about executing that plan and working together to provide the opportunity for people to meet their full potential.

We continue to look for a partner in the federal government, and today's federal budget will provide, perhaps, an—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO FOREST TENURE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA MODERNISATION DU RÉGIME DE TENURE FORESTIÈRE EN ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011 and to amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur la modernisation du régime de tenure forestière en Ontario et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On March 2, 2011, Mr. Gravelle moved second reading of Bill 151. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Orazietti, David
Best, Margarett	Hoskins, Eric	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Murdoch, Bill
Bailey, Robert	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Shurman, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Martiniuk, Gerry	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 26.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): For the information of the members and staff within the building, there was a fire alarm that was triggered on the fourth floor of the north wing. Security was there. Toronto Fire Services has been on-site, and there is no fire. We have received an all-clear.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OXFORD BUSINESSES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Recently, I conducted a survey of Oxford businesses, and I want to thank all the people who took time to share their thoughts and the challenges they are facing. Today, I'm pleased to rise and share their concerns.

While the economic climate has improved somewhat since the last survey, most businesses are still cautious and many of them expressed concerns about the cost of doing business in Ontario. Eighty-seven per cent of businesses reported that, based on the level of services they receive, taxes are too high. They varied on the tax cuts they believe would help their businesses most, but the top two were payroll taxes and a reduction in the HST.

That isn't the only cost that's too high. Ninety-five per cent of businesses reported that they have been impacted by the increasing cost of hydro, and 60% of those businesses said that the impact was significant. It is the same story that we are hearing from families.

I asked people to identify the biggest challenges their business is facing, and the most frequent response was government red tape. When asked to identify the biggest issue with government red tape, 21% said confusing forms, 39% said too much paperwork and 40% said difficulty finding out rules and regulations.

A few weeks ago, I asked the Premier about an internal document that showed this government is hiding red tape rather than cutting it. I hope that this government will listen to the results of this survey and realize that our businesses need action, not just a public relations exercise.

JOYCE BURNELL

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's with sadness today that I rise in the Legislature. Last week, Oakville said goodbye to one of our community's most inspirational leaders, Joyce Burnell, who passed away in her 91st year.

One of her friends remarked recently that Joyce devoted her entire life to the Oakville community, and I fully agree with that statement. She taught elementary school in town, and she volunteered at St. John's United Church, the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario and the Oakville Historical Society. She was recognized with the Community Spirit Award and the Senior Citizen of the Year Award.

She was an unstoppable force, and her volunteer work only increased as the years went by. In fact, she was most known for spearheading a campaign just a few years ago to save the 250-year-old Woodlands white oak tree on Bronte Road. Some people wanted the tree torn down, but Joyce mobilized the community and raised $343,000 to reroute the road and save the tree.

Joyce is going to be fondly missed by many in our community. She was a true role model for old and young alike. Every time I drive by the big oak tree on Bronte Road, I'm going to remember Joyce Burnell, and we all should, as an example of how a life should be lived.

KAYLA MADUK

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Kayla Maduk is the daughter of James and Heather. She's a grade 9 student at John McCrae Secondary School. She's a Barrhaven resident. She is an athlete. As of two weeks ago, she is also a world champion.

Last week, Kayla Maduk made Barrhaven and Canada proud when she won gold and silver medals at the world championship of tae kwon do in New Zealand. Her coach, Steven LeGrow, is from Orléans, as my colleague across the way is also so happy to acknowledge. He operates Blackburn Tae Kwon-Do and won a bronze medal.

Steven and Kayla were two of only three from Ontario to represent Canada at those games. I must say I am very proud of Kayla, as we all are in Barrhaven, because she won the most medals on behalf of Canada.

Her mother said—and I want to quote this, because I think it speaks to all of us who are parents as to how much pride we have in our own children—"I can't tell you how proud I felt watching my little girl standing on the podium hearing the national anthem."

I want Heather and James to know that the people of Nepean–Carleton share their pride in their daughter. We are so proud of her hard work, her determination and, of course, her talent. We also want to thank Heather and James in this Legislature for being supportive and dedicated parents who have helped their daughter realize her dream, meet her goals, and achieve the status of world-class athlete.

To the whole Maduk family on Kayla's gold medal success: Congratulations for your win and thank you for sharing this moment of history with us.

GARY MALKOWSKI

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise again in this Legislature to salute the accomplishments of Gary Malkowski, who represented the riding of York East in the 35th Parliament from 1990 to 1995. On May 13, Gary will be awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters at Gallaudet University, from whence he graduated in the mid-1980s. He will also be the commencement speaker.

Gary is being recognized for his work with the Canadian Hearing Society, but more so, he is being recognized for the enormous work that he continues to do on behalf of the deaf and hard of hearing, and, indeed, on behalf of all Ontarians. He is involved in so many things, including setting up curricula for the Ministry of Education for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. He is on the ARCH Disability Law Centre advisory. He is part of Media Access Canada. He is in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance. He is part of the city of Toronto

disabilities committee, Osgoode Hall Law School, and he is on numerous other boards around this province.

He has won all those awards, but I think the one that surely will mean a lot to him is the honour of his alma mater, as they recognize him with a doctorate of humane letters and as he speaks to the graduates at Gallaudet University as only he can.

NURSES

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to rise and share with the House that last week I was delighted to be part of a service for 29 new graduating practical nursing students from Niagara College, who received their nursing pins.

This pinning ceremony signifies the official initiation into the brotherhood and sisterhood of nurses and is part of a time-honoured nursing school tradition. This ritual, I am told, can often be more personally meaningful than the graduating ceremony as it is rich in symbolism.

I can also tell you personally that constant care by a good nurse is just as important as a major operation by a surgeon. We are fortunate that 29 new nurses will be joining 31 more new nurses graduating later this spring to explore the many opportunities that a career in nursing in Niagara will provide them.

Speaking with the graduating nurses, I found out that while most of them already have job offers, they were delighted that the incentive and support from the McGuinty government would have provided them with guaranteed jobs upon graduation. These nurses tell me that this guarantee gave them the confidence to realize their dreams and enrol in Niagara College's excellent nursing program. We're better off because they did that.

I would ask the House to join me in congratulating these exceptionally talented nurses and wish them well in their new careers.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I rise today to recognize two recent announcements by the Liberal government.

First, the changes to Christopher's Law will bring new reporting obligations to convicted sex offenders. While I think it's a step in the right direction, I still believe we can and should do more to keep an even closer watch over these heinous criminals.

Under the Change of Name Act, it is possible for sex offenders to avoid having their criminal past checked, and so it's possible to legally obtain a new name and assume a new life. Hypothetically speaking, this loophole means that convicted sexual predator Graham James, a former hockey coach convicted of sexually abusing young players, could have easily assumed a new life under a new name in Ontario, just as he was doing in Mexico until recently.

What I want is for Ontario to start using fingerprint technology to screen out people seeking a new name for unscrupulous reasons. My hope is that sooner rather than later, we will overhaul Ontario's name-change process in an effort to stop child molesters from hiding their pasts.

Secondly, I'd like to see real help for MS patients. While providing follow-up care is a step in the right direction, I think Ontario needs to push for therapy trials. Some of you will argue that these procedures carry risks, but this is why it's critical that we start running trials.

We have a responsibility to provide therapy options to our citizens instead of leaving them at the mercy of foreign medical communities. Because MS is such a crippling disease, I know most of the patients would want to volunteer for clinical trials. For us, this treatment may be a novel science, but for those whose time is running out, this treatment is their only hope.

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ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: The weekend of March 26 to 29 is the 26th International Conference of Alzheimer Disease International. People are coming from across the globe: from the Netherlands, Turkey, France, India, Prince Edward Island, Africa, Lebanon, Ireland, China, Tunisia, Finland, just to name a few—even Japan.

They're coming to share their knowledge on epidemiology, identification and prognosis. They will talk about social and cultural issues, and depression in elderly caregivers. They'll talk about rural and northern communities and the public stigma of the disease. They'll talk about the direct trials of drug use: what works and what doesn't work; and the ethics: what to do in end-of-life care.

They'll talk about community-based assessment, speak about behavioural challenges, and they'll talk about the qualify of life of caregivers, respite care, staff training, cultural change in the homes and person-centred care. These are just a few of the topics that will be discussed over the next number of days.

Why does this make any difference here? In Toronto alone there are 39,000 people who have been identified with Alzheimer's disease, and 500,000 in this country. It will rise to 1.2 million within the next 10 to 12 years, a $15-billion problem that will become a $159-billion problem unless we do something about it. That's exactly what this 26th international conference is prepared to tackle, and I agree with them. I think we should be tackling it together.

BOMBARDIER IN THUNDER BAY

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week we had another great announcement at Bombardier in Thunder Bay. Our government announced a $125-million investment for the building of 50 new bi-level rail cars for GO Transit. This will allow the approximately 250 men and women connected with this line to continue their work—work that began with previous GO contracts.

You'll remember that the former government wasn't interested in funding mass transit. As a result, from 1995

to 2003, the local plant in Thunder Bay was in jeopardy of closing.

Our government committed to supporting mass transit in our 2003 platform and since that time we've made substantial investments: $770 million for LRVs, $416 million for replacement streetcars, $280 million for subway contracts, $94 million for previous GO contracts, and now another $125 million. In total, our government has invested around $1.7 billion toward a total of more than $3 billion worth of contracts for Bombardier.

Today, there are 1,000 men and women working in Thunder Bay's Bombardier plant, an increase of 500 to 600, as a direct result of these investments.

This plant and its employees constitute a world-class facility. They produce world-class products and their reputation for quality is well known. The contracts announced, with our government's support, have positioned this plant as a major employer in Thunder Bay's economy for years to come, and that's providing greater security to the 1,000 men and women working in this plant.

LOYAL KIGABIRO

M. Phil McNeely: Durant la Semaine de la francophonie, je veux vous parler du groupe Loyal Kigabiro, un groupe des tambours sacrés du Burundi. J'ai assisté à leur spectacle de percussions le 11 mars dernier, à l'école élémentaire catholique des Pionniers à Orléans. Je remercie M^mes^ Carole Gauthier et Carole Payant, directrice et directrice-adjointe de l'école, pour leur accueil, ainsi que la présence de M^me^ Louise Michaud, directrice artistique du Festival d'Orléans. Un tel spectacle ne serait pas possible sans l'initiative et le travail de M. Patrice Ntafatiro.

Le groupe a fait ce spectacle grâce à une subvention de 5 000 $ du Conseil des arts de l'Ontario. Le Loyal Kigabiro a su intégrer les femmes dans leur groupe alors que cela est interdit au Burundi. C'est un spectacle où le chant, la danse et le rythme du son des tambours nous permettent de comprendre le respect des Burundais pour le tambour, l'instrument sacré au Burundi. Les artistes portent l'uniforme national aux couleurs du Burundi, soit le rouge, le blanc et le vert. Les spectacles se font dans les écoles francophones que fréquentent les membres du groupe.

J'aimerais donc saluer et féliciter le jeune Parfait Représentant Bonwa, en 6^e^ année, pour sa participation.

Ce fut un honneur pour moi d'assister au spectacle et de leur offrir le drapeau franco-ontarien, le Burundi étant un pays membre de la francophonie.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion respecting the consideration of concurrence in supply.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, the order for concurrence in supply for the various ministries and offices, as represented by government orders 34 through 45, inclusive, and order G167, second reading of Bill 167, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, shall be called concurrently; and

That when such orders are called, they shall be considered concurrently in a single debate; and

That the time available to 5:50 p.m. shall be allotted to the debate, divided equally among the recognized parties, at the end of which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for each of the ministries and offices referred to above, and to dispose of all remaining stages of Bill 167; and

That any required divisions on the orders for concurrence in supply or on the motion for second reading of Bill 167 shall be deferred to deferred votes, such votes to be taken in succession with one five-minute bell.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD WATER DAY
JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE L'EAU

Hon. John Wilkinson: Today is World Water Day, an international day of action to draw attention to the importance of clean, safe water.

Ontario has one of the world's largest supplies of fresh water, and over the past decade we have made significant strides to protect it. We have gone from having people get sick from water to being the North American leader in providing safe water.

Je veux d'abord rappeler qu'aujourd'hui est la Journée mondiale de l'eau, une journée internationale de mesures de sensibilisation à l'importance de la pureté et de la salubrité de l'eau.

L'Ontario bénéficie d'une des plus importantes réserves d'eau douce de la planète. Ces 10 dernières années, nous avons fait un grand pas en avant en ce qui a trait à la protection de cette réserve. Nous sommes passés de cas de maladies liées à l'eau à une qualité de l'eau qui fait de nous les chefs de file de la protection de l'eau en Amérique du Nord.

Through our groundbreaking source protection program, we have funded more than 2,500 on-the-ground actions to protect local water sources.

We've also taken significant steps to help restore the ecological health of Lake Simcoe, the Great Lakes and their respective watersheds to protect families in nearby communities. Lake Erie's Wheatley Harbour is one great

example. The harbour, once a toxic hotspot, has been brought back to life. Water quality has improved and the harbour is now home to an abundant and diverse community of fish and wildlife.

Last year, we passed the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. It's about helping Ontarians use water more wisely, promoting innovation in Ontario's growing water sector and sustaining Ontario's water infrastructure.

We're bringing together the best minds in academia and the business world to create an advisory body called WaterTAP to harness our water leadership, to create more skilled jobs that will build a stronger and more competitive economy, and to support water technology companies so they grow, expand and export not water but ideas to an increasingly thirsty world, using their made-in-Ontario expertise.

Ontario is home to a number of companies who are leading the way in the water technology and water services sectors, like Trojan of London, Ontario, which specializes in using ultraviolet light to safeguard the world's water. In the last three years alone, Trojan has created more than 100 new jobs and has just won a contract for the largest ultraviolet disinfection system installation in Melbourne, Australia.

Another example is Zenon, which developed the mobile water filtration technology used to remediate Walkerton's well water. Today, Zenon is part of GE Water and Process Technologies, employing hundreds of Ontarians in Oakville and around the province.

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We believe that clean, safe water should be available to everyone, and that's why we're taking a leadership role to bring clean water to more people. Close to half of the world's population, about 46%, do not have running water in their homes.

Nous croyons que tout le monde devrait avoir accès à une eau pure et salubre. C'est pourquoi nous assumons un rôle de chef de file afin d'offrir de l'eau pure à une population plus nombreuse. Près de la moitié de la population mondiale—environ 46 %—n'a pas l'eau courante à la maison.

We're eager to export the technologies that helped us turn things around so that we can create good jobs here at home and help our friends and partners throughout the world deliver clean, safe water to their people too.

In honour of World Water Day, I'm pleased to announce the new Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence to recognize outstanding environmental achievement, leadership and innovation in environmental protection right here in Ontario.

I encourage all Ontarians to think about our most precious resource, the envy of the world, and what they can do to preserve it for the future of our province.

J'invite tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes à avoir une pensée pour notre ressource la plus précieuse, celle qui fait l'envie de toute la planète. Je les encourage à se demander ce qu'ils peuvent faire pour la protéger pour l'avenir de notre province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Toby Barrett: So here we are recognizing World Water Day, and there's no doubt that the availability of water and the protection of water is one of the world's and Ontario's most important resources for priority, including for our PC caucus, but I do question the push. It seems we designate so many days on the calendar, and I'm not sure to what extent we see real-world results.

We have World Water Day some four months after the pomp and ceremony of the government's legislation, the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. I'm not sure if really anyone across the way did much to lift a finger with respect to the opportunities or the conservation that the bill supposedly allows for. Headlines were grabbed, the cameras went home, and, in my view, so did the government's initiative to crack down on this issue.

One question: Are municipalities presently at work creating and submitting the water use and sustainability plans?

Where are we at as far as WTAP, the vaunted new water corporation? We do know that at the time, the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association described it to us as "an unnecessary cost to taxpayers," adding that it would "slow down the process of developing and implementing regulation." I told the House during debate that WTAP does create another layer of bureaucracy, another layer of red tape.

The legislation can create the spectre of taxpayers' money going to particular companies favoured by the McGuinty government and, again, can be seen to skew the marketplace where we have a situation where big government starts picking winners and losers in the water business.

Again, things were pumped up four months ago: pump and dump. Things were dumped once the television cameras were turned off.

We have noted, of course, that water, and particularly clean water, an element so basic and so essential to individuals, to life on earth, to business, to industry, to our environment, does require protection. There's no question about that. To what extent today's water day brings us closer to that goal, let alone the aforementioned legislation—I hope this government is not watering down the message, if you will, with a seemingly endless series of environmental dates we put on our calendars. To what extent does that dilute the message, dilute the public relations and the promotion, something we saw so successfully done for decades now with Earth Day?

This is a group that brought forward World Water Day. The members opposite brought forward Zero Waste Day; the same caucus brought us Climate Change Awareness Day, Greenbelt Day—on and on.

Environment Commissioner Gord Miller's recent report indicated, again in his words, "poor" and "deteriorating" conditions with respect to water near shore areas, along the beaches at both Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Again, where's the progress on that one?

The world is facing a water crisis, something that will increase in magnitude with the ever-increasing popu-

lation in the world. Close to two billion people now, at present, live in water-stressed regions. By the year 2025, there's indication that two thirds of the world's population will face water scarcity. This appears to be a given. There is work to be done by advanced economies like Ontario's.

In my lifetime, the world's population has tripled. In my lifetime, water consumption has increased seven times over, so the future does give pause for concern. We know that by 2025 we will need an 80% increase in water supplies just to produce food, and particularly meat, which is much more popular as the world grows.

Mr. Howard Hampton: On behalf of New Democrats, I'm pleased to be able to make a few remarks on World Water Day.

Ontario is indeed blessed. In fact, of all the jurisdictions on the planet, Ontario is probably in one of the most favourable positions when it comes to the availability of clean, safe drinking water and having abundant resources. But we should be judged on what we do within our own bailiwick in terms of taking responsibility for our water.

Sadly, First Nations in Ontario today are having to join forces to oppose the shipment of 16 radioactive-contaminated steam generators through the Welland Canal, the Great Lakes and along the St. Lawrence River. In fact, these First Nations are marking World Water Day as the launch of the light-blue ribbon campaign to protect Ontario's Great Lakes water supply.

Southwest regional Anishinabek Nation chief Chris Plain says the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and the Bruce Power Corp. did not sufficiently consult First Nation communities about the proposed nuclear waste shipment. "We will do everything in our power to prevent the Ontario and federal governments and the nuclear power industry from using our precious waterways as a garbage disposal route," says Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee of the Anishinabek Nation.

As I said, we should be judged on what we do in our own bailiwick. Before we talk about the global market for water, we need to look after our own backyard. What's happening in our own backyard? Well, over 80 First Nation communities are currently under boil-water advisories, and 21 communities are deemed to be at high risk for contamination. We have this unusual situation where the federal government says, "Water resources are an Ontario responsibility," and Ontario says, "But First Nations are a federal responsibility," and everyone forgets that First Nations are citizens of Ontario too.

We would all be wise, on World Water Day, to remember northern communities like Kashechewan, whose residents were forced to evacuate by the hundreds due to poor water quality and unsanitary conditions in 2005. Contamination and inadequate water and sanitation services in First Nation communities are a real and present threat to human health and to the environment.

1530

The government claims that its Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act aims to stimulate Ontario-based clean water industry by creating municipal demand for clean water technology and by supporting clean water technology development. I can only say that First Nations across Ontario are saying, "And what about us? Don't we matter? Don't we count?" And rightfully so, that they ask these questions.

Despite the good intentions of the government's bill, there are a number of concerns about how this bill will improve the quality of life for all Ontarians, including those living in aboriginal communities in the north. Some of the concerns include affordability for consumers and infrastructure costs. Announcing a bill but then failing to provide municipalities with the funding to undertake water conservation measures is not a way to proceed. It will likely result in higher water rates falling on local citizens. Municipalities already spend $1.5 billion per year on water and waste water systems, and in 2008 the Association of Municipalities of Ontario review found that municipalities would have to spend an additional $6 billion every year for 10 years to make up the gap between current investment levels and needed investment levels.

On World Water Day, one is given to ask, "Where is the province in addressing this issue?" Access and quality: We're worried that this bill may lead to privatization of water delivery, leading to rising costs and water for some and not for others..

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis; and

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low risk and at relative low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I'll affix my signature and send it to the table, and it is certified.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Joe Guido and Mrs. Selina Clement Mikkola, both members of Local 6500 USW Sudbury, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it, and will ask page Devan to bring it to the Clerk.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Phil McNeely: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this government supports full-day kindergarten in all schools; and

"Whereas full-day kindergarten was introduced in Our Lady of Wisdom Catholic School, Convent Glen public school, ÉÉC Sainte-Marie, Brother André Catholic School, École élémentaire publique Des Sentiers and École élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin in Ottawa-Orléans in September of 2010; and

"Whereas it is the government's intention to introduce full-day kindergarten in Fallingbrook Community Elementary School and Blessed Kateri Catholic school in Ottawa-Orléans schools in September 2011; and

"Whereas the government intends to fully implement full-day kindergarten in all schools by 2015; and

"Whereas parents of four- and five-year-olds have supported this program;

"Whereas the Conservative Party of Ontario said that they would freeze this program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support full-day kindergarten and to follow the implementation schedule which will complete the program by 2015."

I will gladly sign this petition and send it up with Sydney.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have here a petition being read in the Legislature for the first time, 123 pages long and signed by 1,229 people who come from my riding of Thornhill, Glen Shields, Brownridge and Concord West. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario and GO/Metrolinx are currently proposing the construction of a GO/Metrolinx intermodal station hub and parking lot on crown land (land registry PIN number 032320650) owned by the Ontario Realty Corporation, land which adjoins to the east of the Concord West community in the city of Vaughan and has been in the community's traditional green space; and

"Whereas the land in question is ecologically sensitive and demonstrably part of the Bartley Smith Greenway; and

"Whereas safe access to this land and the said greenway by the Concord West community residents and seniors is needed from Rockview Gardens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government transfer the subject land from the Ontario Realty Corporation to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority."

I agree with this petition. I affix my name to it and file it with page Fatemah, from Thornhill.

TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS

M^me^ France Gélinas: Il me fait plaisir de présenter une pétition qui a été avancée par M. Conrad Mazerolle de l'Association des enseignants francophones de l'Ontario.

« Attendu que les grèves et les lock-out sont rares; en moyenne, 97 % des conventions collectives sont négociées sans arrêt de travail; et

« Attendu que des lois contre le remplacement temporaire des travailleurs existent au Québec depuis 1978 et en Colombie-Britannique depuis 1993, et les gouvernements successifs de ces deux provinces n'ont jamais abrogé ces lois; et

« Attendu que la loi contre le remplacement temporaire des travailleurs a réduit la longueur et la discorde des conflits du travail; et

« Attendu que le remplacement temporaire des travailleurs pendant une grève ou un lock-out compromet le tissu social d'une communauté à court et à long terme ainsi que le bien-être de ses résidents », ils demandent à l'Assemblée « d'adopter une loi interdisant le remplacement temporaire de travailleurs pendant une grève ou un lock-out. »

J'appuie cette pétition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to stand and read in the following petition. I would like to thank Mrs. Darlene Hacrey from Windsor for her support in putting together over 2,000 signatures on these petitions. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform

Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 22, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each ... grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child"; and, finally,

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each ... grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their ... grandparents."

I'm extremely proud to put my signature on this and submit this.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting $15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax" alone, "ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians, including the people of Elmvale."

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

1540

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Rick Johnson: This petition is from the Strathroy fire department and the Mt. Brydges fire department.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and present it to page Grace.

RURAL AND NORTHERN SCHOOLS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to save rural and northern schools in Ontario:

"Whereas rural and northern schools are an important part of Ontario; and

"Whereas rural and northern schools are widely recognized for their high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural and northern schools are different from large urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural and northern school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural and northern schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open help keep—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found $12 million to keep swimming pools open in Toronto schools but hasn't found any money to keep rural and northern schools open in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of rural and northern Ontario and suspend all accommodation reviews until the province develops a rural and northern school policy that recognizes the values of these schools in their communities."

I've signed this. and I'm going to send it with Madelaine.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition from Steve Guay, from Port Elgin, Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this, will affix my signature to it and give it to Cherechi.

COYOTES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas coyote predation is a growing problem in rural Ontario, especially on farms; and

"Whereas there are documented reports that coyotes are attacking people and pets and the attacks are getting more aggressive; and

"Whereas as many as 6,000 lambs and sheep alone are killed by coyotes on Ontario farms every year; and

"Whereas these losses are seriously impacting farmers' incomes; and

"Whereas the current control measures authorized by the Ministry of Natural Resources under the municipal financial incentives for control of coyote predation program are cumbersome and impossible to adhere to;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government minimize predator losses by implementing a province-wide coyote control program that includes a $200 bounty for each coyote carcass and allow counties to implement their own proof-of-kill collection system."

I've signed this. I'm going to send it with Madelaine again.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I've signed this petition. I'll send it to the table with page Riley.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I want to thank the corporation of the town of New Tecumseth for sending this batch of petitions to me.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Orleans urgent care centre provides emergency care for the residents of Orleans, utilizing many of the same capabilities along with the medical facilities and the equipment available at a hospital emergency department. The OUCC is equipped to administer treatment for serious acute medical conditions, including heart attack, asthma, fractures and dislocations, lacerations and allergic reactions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"As the funding is up for renewal, to continue to provide funding to the Orleans urgent care centre to allow this clinic to stay open evenings and weekends to support

the health needs of the community of Orleans and surrounding areas."

This is signed by several people from Ottawa–Orléans, and I put my signature and send it up with Fatemah.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank the Food for All Food Bank in Prescott for providing me with this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need;

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with the bill, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Madelaine.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

SUPPLY ACT, 2011
LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2011

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Government Services; the Ministry of Revenue; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry; the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, including supplementaries; the Ministry of Transportation; the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; and the Cabinet Office, and I move second reading of Bill 167, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Today we are debating concurrently concurrence and the Supply Act. Just as a little refresher for my colleagues in the House, which I needed as well today to remember why we do this every year: In order for the expenditures estimates to be approved by the Legislative Assembly, they must be reviewed and passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates; reported back and received by the Legislative Assembly, with the standing committee's recommendation that it be approved; and the assembly must concur in that recommendation.

1550

The expenditure estimates of the ministries and legislative offices that were not chosen for review by the standing committee are deemed under the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly to have gone through the process. However, the Legislative Assembly must actually approve the expenditure estimates of the ministries that were chosen for review by the standing committee by the passing of orders of concurrence, which is what we are doing today.

After there is deemed or actual concurrence in all the estimates for a fiscal year, the Supply Act for the fiscal year can be introduced in the Legislature for first reading. And we are doing concurrently, as I mentioned, the Supply Act. The Supply Act has to be enacted for each fiscal year. The legislation is essential because, if passed, it will provide the government with the necessary statutory authority to finance required expenditures for the 2010-11 fiscal year.

The member for Beaches–East York is not listening to my primer. I'm a little offended. I'm just trying to help you out here.

Supply gives the government the authority to finance the programs it has set out, fulfill its commitments and put its vision into practice. All expenditures that have been incurred under the Supply Act must be in accordance with the main and supplementary expenditure estimates for the 2010-11 fiscal year, which have already been reviewed and approved by the Legislative Assembly.

The Supply Act does not authorize any new spending. Pending the results of the Supply Act vote, spending authority is provided under interim appropriation statutes, which are generally repealed with passage of the act.

Interjection.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We're just so delighted to have you here, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. We're glad that you're here for this important debate today.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I am too.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you.

Because the Supply Act is intended to be the statutory authority for all expenditures incurred during 2010-11, it is deemed to have come into force on the first day of the fiscal year. In this case, if passed today, the Supply Act would be deemed to have come into force on April 1, 2010.

The amounts included in the Supply Act are based on main and supplementary estimates for the fiscal year 2010-11 that have been tabled in the Legislature. The act, as I said before, does not authorize any new spending.

With that, I look forward to hearing some no doubt inspired debate from my colleagues opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I may need some more water here, because I seem to have a bit of a cough happening just as I'm about to speak.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to debate this concurrence-in-supply motion. As was mentioned by the government House leader, it doesn't authorize any new spending. I would call it more of a housekeeping motion that we do each year. But I would like to use the opportunity in this debate to talk about the budget process, seeing as the provincial budget will be delivered next Tuesday.

During the course of the pre-budget hearings this winter, our PC members on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs heard from dozens of industry experts, from economists to nurses, miners to farmers, teachers to manufacturers. Based on what we heard, our caucus has offered our own recommendations.

Across the province, families have told us they cannot afford skyrocketing hydro bills. They are tired of new taxes like the HST and the eco tax, and they want to see change. Our members have read dozens of letters and emails in this House to underscore the challenges that Ontario families are facing. Seniors especially are struggling to keep their heads above water as their incomes are increasingly eroded by ever-rising bills. The upcoming provincial budget provides this government an opportunity to provide that change and give families the respect and relief they deserve.

Our caucus also received hundreds of written submissions from businesses and families who were compelled to provide their advice on a variety of issues on how to best get Ontario moving forward, how to protect the government services that matter most and how to give families a chance to catch up.

I'd like to quote for you from just a few of the presenters that we heard on the finance and economic affairs committee, and from submissions made to the committee.

Rob Rea of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce said, "With respect to energy, to maintain a robust economy and achieve economic growth in Ontario, businesses need access to reliable and affordable energy."

Just in case that's not clear enough, Michael McSweeney of the Cement Association of Canada was a little more blunt. He said, "The electricity crisis that you're facing today in Ontario is not just a residential consumer political battle; it's a crisis that will soon have business running out of the province looking for more friendly territories to invest in."

And Mr. McGuinty's time-of-use tax machines aren't any better. Joan Brintnell of Lions McInnes House, a provider of intervenor services for the deaf-blind, said, "I can't tell a deaf-blind person that they can't have a bath at 9 in the morning because they need to get up at 6 o'clock to do that. There's no relief there."

Just a few comments from real people trying to live and work under the McGuinty government.

But outside the hearings, members of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, criss-crossed Ontario in January talking to families in more than 80 communities. Based on their advice, I would like to outline some of our recommendations for the upcoming budget: to create well-paying private sector jobs, to get government focused on services that matter to families and to give families the relief they deserve.

First, the McGuinty government must change its approach to private sector job creation. Rather than hand out massive subsidies to foreign companies like Samsung or Ubisoft, we believe in creating a level playing field to give all businesses the chance to invest and create jobs here. That means a drastic change in approach is necessary from this government. We're calling on the government to put an end to its corporate welfare schemes to pick winners and losers in the marketplace. We're calling on them to give small businesses a break by appointing a member of the cabinet to be responsible for meeting measurable hard targets in red tape reduction. We're calling on them to commit to investing in job-creating infrastructure projects like the mid-pen and 407 East highways.

Businesses were clear in telling us that provincial policies and red tape are job killers. Katherine Walker of the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce told us, "Compliance regulations and standards, along with duplication of paperwork to meet audit requirements ... creates a disadvantage and severely limits business's ability to be competitive. The cost to do business in Ontario eats up ever-shrinking margins, discourages investment, eliminates growth and pressures sustainability."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business told us that one in four businesses "would not have started their business had they known the full impact of the regulatory burden on their business." That's a shocking statement and all the more worrisome given that small business will be the catalyst for real economic recovery and job creation.

The McGuinty government must get government focused on the priorities that matter for families. We absolutely must get the size of government under control. This government's reckless spending, waste and record deficits mean that it's on course to double the province's debt. The deeper that the McGuinty government digs into a hole, the harder it will be to dig out and the more essential services like health care will be put in jeopardy.

That's why, with the 2011 budget, we are calling on the government to fix the broken arbitration system and ensure that public sector agreements reflect the ability of families to pay the bills. We are calling on the government to scrap its wasteful LHIN bureaucracy and invest those tax dollars into front-line health care.

To rein in waste across the board, we are calling for a mandatory sunset review process to be included in this year's budget that forces every government body to justify their existence and continued value to the public.

The Auditor General's report involving the Municipal Property Assessment Corp's expenses and procurement revealed bad business practices costing Ontario families millions of dollars—money spent on incentives and pro-

motional items like a Nintendo Wii, signature golf clubs, lavish dinners and lunches for staff, and the list goes on and on.

All this when Ontario households are trying to make their hard-earned dollars stretch from month to month, which brings me to our final point: that this government must provide families with relief.

1600

The HST, the eco tax, auto insurance premiums, skyrocketing hydro bills—these costs add up. We want to see the McGuinty government use this year's budget to finally give Ontario families and seniors some relief, but after nearly eight years of increasing taxes we're not hopeful. That's why we ask for this government's firm commitment that there won't be any new taxes like school board taxes, a new eco tax on cars or a carbon tax, or any surprise announcement after the budget. We're calling for the removal of the eco tax on TVs, gaming systems, laptops and DVD and Blu-ray players. As well, hydro bills are no longer just a bill for Ontario families; they have become the bill. That's why we're calling on the McGuinty government to pull the plug on their expensive energy experiments that are driving up the cost of hydro, including their smart meter tax machines.

I would like at this point to bring it back to the riding level. I would say virtually every day I've received a new email from a constituent concerned about their energy bills and I just want to get a couple on the record. Here's one: "This month's bill mentions that we get 10% off from the Ontario government. The next line reads that we will be getting a delivery rate increase effective starting Jan 1, 2011. Is this a joke?

"Things are out of hand."

Signed by, "Unhappy electricity user and tax payer."

I think consumers, after seeing their bills go up 75%—100% if you take in time-of-use meters—aren't fooled by this. Raise the rates 100%, give them 10% back and they're supposed to be happy. Well, people aren't happy out there.

A Parry Sound resident wrote—

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: These are real people who are writing, for the members of the government. You might want to listen to some of the people in your ridings.

A Parry Sound resident wrote, "We are very concerned about the cost of hydro. We live in a 1,200square-foot bungalow, two bedrooms, one bathroom.

"The cost of hydro is beyond the what the average Ontario citizen can now afford. We are not referring to the people working in major centres where income is much higher.

"We are concerned about those in the Parry Sound area."

Another constituent wrote, "I am a senior living on a fixed income. I was quite disturbed to hear of an increase to hydro rates, immediately after receiving a letter from Hydro One telling of TOU prices to be effective at the end of March. The TOU prices also reflect an increase to hydro rates. These rate increases seem to be quite frequent lately, and appear to be at the whim of Hydro One. Now rates will also go up again to pay for Hydro One's lawsuit that was of their own doing and greed.

"A very concerned citizen."

I've got hundreds and hundreds of those letters. I could go on all day with different, very specific examples.

As well, we are calling yet again for an audit of the debt retirement charge so that families and seniors know exactly how much debt is left. Very quickly: The debt retirement charge was to pay for the residual stranded debt. The residual stranded debt was $7.8 billion in 2002. That amount of money has been collected. People paying that debt retirement charge every month on their hydro bill want to know and have a right to know how much is left. Some $7.8 billion dollars have been collected. How much is owing on that bill?

Ontario families cannot afford another McGuinty government budget that raises government spending well beyond Ontario's economic growth and Ontario families' ability to pay. We're calling on the government to release a budget that focuses on job creation, getting government spending under control and giving respect and relief to Ontario families.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed a privilege to rise after the eloquent presentation made by the member from—

Mr. Norm Miller: Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Michael Prue: No. He did a good job too, but I was thinking about the honourable member who represents the city of North Bay. She gave an eloquent rendition of what this is all about. She talked about supply and motion, but I think the bottom line is that unless the Legislature passes this, a whole bunch of civil servants and people who work very hard don't get paid. I think that's what the debate should be about because they are people who deserve our support. They are people who work very hard for the people of Ontario. They work in ministries that have been subject to some kind of review, but they, too, indeed need to be paid. I think that's what's important.

The other thing she didn't say is that the habit in the Legislature is that we debate budget issues more than the supply motion. We don't talk about the need to pay people their wages, because we understand intuitively that people need to be paid for the work they do, but we often talk about what's in the potential budget and/or what is going to happen next week.

I want to talk about what I'm hoping is going to happen in the budget next week. I'm not dreaming in Technicolor, because I know Liberals only too well. I know that this government is as conservative as anything we envisage or that we see in Ottawa at this time, and I know that whatever the Harper government in Ottawa does, the McGuinty government is probably going to walk pretty much in lockstep. I watch them around the whole HST fiasco as Ottawa says how important it is to have the HST, and then to see the McGuinty government fall in lockstep and start talking about the same things.

I remember, you know, when the finance ministers—they used to debate across this aisle fiercely with the finance minister of the Conservative government in Ottawa, Mr. Flaherty. They had fierce, fierce debates between one side and the other, depending on who held the office of finance minister and who was the critic. But since he went there, it seems that almost everything that is said in Ottawa is echoed here in Ontario. It is hard to listen to the finance minister today in Ontario without listening to him echoing the praises and the same phrases and the same things that he is doing—what the Minister of Finance does in Ontario, the other one does the lockstep argument and the same things in Ottawa.

New Democrats see it a little bit differently. We wonder why the government of Canada is so wedded to the idea of corporate tax cuts. We wonder in this Legislature why the government of Ontario, the McGuinty government, is wedded to those same corporate tax cuts.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Now, I heard somebody over there on the other side yell about Jack. Jack is going to do the right things by the people of this country, I am absolutely—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I think that's the thing: She doesn't know Jack. She doesn't know Jack at all. I've had the privilege of knowing Jack Layton for many years. I knew of him, but I actually got to know him very well when I was mayor of East York and he was a Metropolitan Toronto councillor. We sat on the same council for five years. I watched a man who is very smart in terms of figuring out what is happening and how to take advantage of it for the people he represents literally at all times. I watched a man who, when Mel Lastman was mayor and didn't have a clue often one day to the next what he was doing, was able to wring out concessions from Mel Lastman and make sure that the things that Jack believed in actually happened.

I watched him do the same thing with the Martin government. My God, does anybody over there remember how he wrung $4.6 billion worth of concessions to keep that government in power? And he is attempting his very best to try to wring the same thing out of the Conservatives in Ottawa.

Now, I know that that's going to be an almost impossible task, and if anybody over there has a couple of dollars, I don't bet very often, but I'll be willing to bet that nothing that the Harper government can come up with right around now when I'm speaking will satisfy what he is looking for, because he is looking for a lot. He is looking for those concessions that he thinks will work, and if they are not there—he is an honourable man, more honourable than most politicians I have ever met in my entire life—I have extreme confidence he will do the right thing. If there are not the things in that budget that he has advocated for and that he believes in, then he will not support it. I expect by the end of today the newspapers, the blogs and everything else will be filled with stories about how Jack is not satisfied and about how this government's days are numbered.

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But I want to talk about this government here in Ontario, this very government that is always walking in lockstep with everything that Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Harper have to say in Ottawa. It is known, it is universally accepted, it is trite that by 3 o'clock on January 1, executives and CEOs in this province have already earned the average salary of an Ontario citizen—3 o'clock on January 1. They haven't even shown up to work because it's a holiday, and they've already earned as much as most people earn in a whole year.

What does this government have to say about that? You think it's normal. You think it's honourable. You think it's good. You support it. When they screw up, these barons of industry, these people who are appointed by governments, you give them huge paycheques. We've seen the same thing happening down in Niagara; we're seeing the same thing happen down in Windsor. Huge paycheques are given to people who screw up, and they already earn enormous amounts of money. What does this government say or do about it?

I've sat and stood here in my place and talked about the CEOs of Ontario, all of those on the public dime, all of those who were in public institutions and the salaries that they earned: $6 million a year, $5 million a year, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. I went down through the list. I went down, one after another, and I asked the Liberals to think about limiting these salaries, which are gross by comparison. Ordinary people can't even fathom what it is to earn this much money for screwing up so badly.

I listened to my colleagues today in the Conservative Party asking questions about the OPA and the screw-ups of these government-appointed people. They've gone from—if their figures were right—about 15 people a few years ago to 75 now. They've gone from a couple of million dollars to $15 million. Things aren't going well, yet this government insists that we pay all of this money.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. They want to pay all this money to all of these people. They never stop to think, are we getting any value for the money? Are taxpayers well served? Are those people paying for these bloated salaries—$20,000, $30,000 and $40,000 a year—getting any value at all?

The NDP proposed something which I didn't think was radical at all. It's certainly something that is quite common over most of Europe. That is that we limit the salaries to five, six or 10 times the average industrial wage or, as we put it, that they earn no more than twice as much as the Premier. My goodness, what a radical thought. The Premier of this province, who ultimately is responsible to this Legislature and to 13 million people, we pay a veritable pittance. I don't know what he makes—people who earn $200,000, $220,000?

Mr. Peter Shurman: About that.

Mr. Michael Prue: About $200,000, $220,000. We are suggesting that the highest-priced CEO on the public dime shouldn't earn more than twice that.

Is that a radical thought? I think not. I think that's an absolutely logical thing. We put forward a bill, and we tried to say that maybe, just maybe, we should rein in some of these perks; maybe, just maybe, we should rein in some of these salaries; maybe, just maybe, we should question why these men and women who have been appointed by the Liberal government should earn more than twice the Premier's salary.

Now, I sit here every day. He doesn't have an easy job. I don't have to agree with him. He has a pretty tough job answering questions from me, answering questions from the member for Thornhill, answering questions from all sides of this House—although I'm sure most of the tough questions get asked in this little space over here. Most of the other questions aren't very tough to him at all, and I think that's by design. But he has a pretty hard job. The press makes sure that he's on his toes. He has to be on top of every single issue as it happens, he has to answer every single complaint, and he is ultimately responsible for a budget in excess of $100 billion and the lives of 13 million people.

When we raise this issue—you know, how come somebody running a nondescript little corporation makes two or three or four times, or 10 times more than the Premier?—we are met with total indifference. And I have to ask the Liberals opposite the same question that I asked those many months ago, when our bill was—there are only two alternatives here. Either the Liberals opposite think that these people are worth four to five or six or 10 times more than their own Premier, or they have to think that the Premier is four or five or six or 10 times less worthy than they are. In either event, I don't understand this.

I don't understand at all why this government is not doing something about what David Lewis used to call the "corporate welfare bums," because they're not just at Exxon, they're not just at Shell or in the big banks or in the insurance companies. Today these bums also work for us, and I have to question: Is any individual worth this amount of money, and why isn't this government doing anything about this, to this day and probably in this budget? Between 1999 and today, some $20 billion has been given in corporate tax cuts, first by the Conservatives but more recently and more generously by the Liberals, who replaced them.

As I said, I thought about David Lewis, and the reason I thought about him is on the weekend, I was cleaning out an old bookshelf. I probably have far too many books and probably read too much in terms of political science and economics and anthropology and religion and all the things that I like to spend my leisure time reading about. One of the books I found was David Lewis's Corporate Welfare Bums. I brought it into the office because I want to reread it. I had forgotten I had this little tiny paperback in my library. But what interested me wasn't that David Lewis had written this, because of course he had written this. It wasn't that he had pontificated about this, because a whole election—he set the electorate on fire with his talk about how people were ripping off the system and not paying their taxes, while they were being gouged. But what intrigued me about the book is, I looked underneath; the foreword to the book and the critical analysis of the book was written by a Liberal, Eric Kierans. Remember him? It was written by Eric Kierans, and I had forgotten that.

I had forgotten the role that many Liberals used to think about: fairness, and tax fairness to ordinary people. It used to be that Liberals believed in that, and today they walk in lockstep with the Harper government and all those people in industry who say, "I'm paying way too much in taxes even though I make $6 million a year. Please reduce my taxes. If you don't reduce the taxes of my company, I won't be able to hire additional people," and all those other things which probably are not true at all. Today Liberals walk in lockstep. All those many years ago, Eric Kierans, brave soul that he was, agreed with the NDP that maybe, just maybe, people who earn a lot of money, and corporations, should pay their fair share.

I'm standing up here today to tell this government opposite that maybe, just maybe, you should say that people who earn a lot of money and corporations who have the money should pay their fair share. What would happen if you had another couple of billion dollars? Another $2 billion or $3 billion or $4 billion? What would Liberals do with that money? I know one of the things you should do is you should put some of that money against the $18.7-billion deficit that you are going to leave to the next government, because that's the reality. I was here when—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: That's what I'm going to talk about. I was here when the Conservatives left you $5 billion.

1620

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It was $6 billion.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, $6 billion.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It wasn't either.

Mr. Michael Prue: Whatever it was, it was tiny in comparison to what you are going to leave someone else. It was tiny—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: It doesn't matter. It was a depression. It is tiny in comparison to what is going to be left now. So maybe, just maybe, you will take some of that money, if you get it from your corporate friends, and pay it against the deficit.

Another thing you could do is take some of that money and help the poor. Heaven knows, when I opened up the Toronto Star today, I read that 400,000 Ontarians—400,000—rely on food banks. For those of you who were in question period today, did you hear what the Acting Premier had to say about that? He had nothing to say. He said absolutely nothing in terms of 400,000 people having to go to food banks.

I am totally aware that, later, the Liberals stood the member from Mississauga–Streetsville up to ask the very last question in the House of the Minister of Children and

Youth Services, trying to put a Liberal spin on it by saying that some children are being helped. But the reality is that 400,000 Ontarians today are relying on food banks, which is a 28% increase—28%—since 2008.

Now, 2008: Let me think about that magic date. Why does 2008 ring a bell? Oh, I remember now. The then minister, Minister Matthews, who is now the Minister of Health, stood here and talked about the Liberals' plan to end poverty in Ontario. You know, they were going to do 25 in five; within the next five years, they were going to reduce it by 25%. The first bellwether, the first real statistic we have, is that three years later, people are relying on food banks 28% more than they were before. Something is very wrong with this.

Why is it wrong? When I go out to places, I am told what the Minister of Community and Social Services has to say to all of the groups: those on ODSP, those who are on Ontario Works, those who rely on some form of public assistance to get by in their lives. The answer that they are told is, "Don't you know there's a deficit? Don't you know that we're in hard economic times?" Well, of course people know we're in deficit. Of course we know we're in hard economic times. But the question in their hearts and their souls and their minds is, how come the very, very rich and the corporations, like the banks and the insurance companies, are going to get a $2-billion windfall, and why is it that this government has a complete hands-off attitude to corporate giants and CEOs who make $5 million, $6 million and $7 million a year in general salary? Their actual take-home pay has gone up and their tax levels have gone down under this government.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: So has yours.

Mr. Michael Prue: And the minister says that so has mine. I would gladly help the poor, as I did when this very government instituted a raise for all of us. I gave every single penny in that year—every single penny—to charity.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: And they holler some more, because they have no soul, because they have no idea whatsoever of that which they are talking about.

I am somewhat ashamed at all the catcalls coming from them. I am somewhat ashamed of all of them for what they're catcalling and for what they're saying. The reality is, they call me because I gave my money to charity. You know? They call me.

Mr. Jeff Leal: How do you know we didn't?

Mr. Michael Prue: I don't know what you did, member from Peterborough. I don't know what you did at all, but I do know that you never spoke about anything to do with this. I do know that.

This government is hell-bent on increasing corporate profits. In fact, in Ontario, corporate profits have gone up 7.9% in the last quarter and are now resting at $66 billion. What do Liberals have to say about this? They probably say, "Great." I say, "Great." I think it's a good thing, but I think the people of Ontario want to get their fair share. I think the people of Ontario expect that when corporate profits go up 7.9%, you don't get a tax decrease; you get a tax increase. You pay your fair share for living and working in Ontario and for the people who are here. People need this money; the province needs this money.

Now, through all the catcalls, I'm going to go on to the next, which is that the Ontario government says the corporate income tax cut will hand $535 million to banks and $135 million to insurance companies. These are government figures. Why? Why are you doing this?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Because my son needs it.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh. I have an answer over here: "Because my son needs it." The member from Essex says his son needs this money. Perhaps his son does need the money, but lots of people dream about having this kind of money or the kind of money like this to eradicate poverty in our province. Lots of people talk about this in terms of the kind of infrastructure that we could make in our schools and our hospitals and everything else if we had this kind of money.

They are this government's own figures. That's on top of the $520 million provided to banks through the elimination of the capital tax. That's money this government no longer has. What could we do with $520 million? Maybe some of them over there should ask about this. Maybe they should ask, "What could we do instead of eliminating the capital tax?" How could we help our communities? How could we build roads and schools and hospitals and government institutions and provide jobs and eradicate poverty and the thousand things that could and should be debated in this Legislature?

We also have the figure here that of the $4 billion in corporate tax cuts the government has announced, $1.2 billion will be pocketed by banks and insurance companies, the vast majority going to only eight companies which dominate Ontario's financial sector. I have here some figures from some of those because I think they would be interesting to anybody who might be watching this instead of the budget; I'm not sure how many people will be.

Scotiabank had a quarterly profit in the last quarter of $1.2 billion. That's a 19% increase from the quarter before. Their CEO is paid $10.6 million, up 10%. Anybody over there think that doesn't sound too good? Or how about the Royal Bank? A $1.8-billion quarterly profit: That's a 23% increase from the quarter before. Its CEO is being rewarded with $11 million, and that's up 6% from the year before.

Yes, and the member from Thornhill thinks he's in the wrong business. I think I'm in the right business because I think my job is to tell people about what's happening out there.

We have the TD Bank quarterly profit: $1.5 billion. That's up 19% from the quarter before. Their CEO earns $11.3 million, which is up 8% from the year before. Finally, we have the Bank of Montreal, the only other figures I have, which only made a paltry $776 million, but it too was up 18%. Their CEO earns $9.5 million, and that's up 28% from the year before. This is what's hap-

pening at the same time when people who earn minimum wage in this province have seen it frozen. I know that every time I say anything even remotely positive, it's quoted in the Legislature and then in some brochure the Liberals put out. But it was sad that there were no increases for all those years in the minimum wage, and increasing the minimum wage the few times that the Liberals did it wasn't a bad thing. I expect to see that in quotes somewhere, but I do hope you put the "but" in.

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This year, when you didn't do it again, was not a good move. This year was a sad move. Because to make it to $11, after which it could have been indexed, after which someone who worked 40 hours a week could have made their way from the poverty line, would have been a real statement. It would have said that people who work 40 hours a week, who pay their way, who work hard, who make $11 an hour have finally escaped poverty. But this government chose not to do it. I don't know why they chose not to do it, but they did. I guess some of the interests got to them.

I have to also talk about those people who don't even make the $10.25 an hour. That is, all of the servers, all of the people in the restaurant industry, all of those people for whom it is expected that they're going to get tips earn substantially less. That has never been modified. In spite of the fact that today they are having their tips ripped from them, where the ministry and this government refuses to do anything to end the tip-out practice whereby employers take the tips from them when they are received and sometimes give back a portion to the servers who actually earned the tips. This is a government that is not really doing much when it comes to all of that.

I want to talk a little bit more about some of the other aspects here. The corporate tax cuts that this government is insistent upon giving all of the time are really out of whack. This government is hell-bent on making this the lowest tax jurisdiction in all of North America, and they'll make no bones about it. They'll make no bones about having a lower tax rate than some of the southern United States. They'll make no bones about having a lower corporate tax rate because they say that it's going to produce jobs. But the reality is that there isn't one scintilla of evidence that backs that up—not one single scintilla of evidence. In fact, corporate tax cuts have little positive impact on job creation since they have almost no impact on business capital investment spending.

If you look, most of the industries pocket the monies. There has been nothing in this province, except that corporations have been accumulating cash and similar liquid assets at an increasing rate, and in fact jobs have actually gone down. The big banks today, in spite of all the monies that have been poured in by this government, have 25,000 fewer people working for them than they did five years ago. So you give all these tax breaks to create jobs, and there are fewer jobs. Where are these tax breaks creating jobs?

We in the NDP think that there are alternatives that this government should be following—good alternatives, alternatives that would work, that are used in Manitoba, in Quebec, in other places in North America where you reward companies who create jobs by giving tax breaks. You target them. You don't give a universal one so that corporate profits can go up, so that CEO salaries can be obscene, in the $10-million, $11-million and $12-million range. You give tax breaks so that jobs are created, so that machinery is bought, so that people are employed. That's what needs to happen, and that's not what's happening here.

In fact, in Ontario we are pricing ourselves towards the bottom. We are becoming the Contadoras of North America. We are taking off after the somewhat failed—I think not even somewhat—the failed northern Mexico experiment on the border with the United States. Look at the combined tax rates for our major competitors. Michigan, which is right next door, right opposite my friend's riding—you go across to Detroit. The tax rate in Michigan is 38.2%. The tax rate in Ontario is 28.5%. We already have a tax advantage before more money is given away. Or look at New York, which you can look at across the lake from Toronto, and you'll see that they're at 36.1%. We already have a tax advantage. Or we look at Pennsylvania, which is not more than a few hours' drive from here: 37.8%. We have a nearly 10% tax advantage. If you look at the Great Lakes weighted average, it's 36.6%. We have an 8% tax advantage. If you look at the US weighted average at 36.1%, we have a 7.5% weighted average.

I'm not sure why we have to go lower. Perhaps someone in the Liberal Party can explain this. Can you explain why we can forgo all of the money, why we have to see profits increase, tax revenues decrease, why we see obscene CEO salaries?

I promised my colleague I'd save him five minutes, much to your pleasure, I'm sure, but I just want to talk about the HST. The government has insisted that tax harmonization wouldn't result in increased costs for consumers, but analysis conducted by Statistics Canada on behalf of the NDP—and we had to fight a long time to get it—found that the average family will pay $792 more in taxes every year. Even after they receive $322 in tax cuts and credits, they will be $470 behind. Even if we assume businesses will pass every penny they save to consumers in lower prices, the average family will still pay $638 more in taxes every year and receive $322 in tax cuts and credits, leaving them $316 behind. The middle class, of course, is hurt the most. The government's own estimates, obtained through freedom of information, indicate that the average family will pay $225 more annually for these items alone.

When I go out to talk to the people of Beaches–East York, this is the number one issue. I don't think this will surprise Liberal members opposite. When you go out and talk to people, the HST is the number one issue. Even though the government may want to change this to education or health or hospitals or whatever they want to change it to, the number one issue to me at the doors and in places where I meet my constituents is the anger over

the HST. They're angry because they do not believe that this is revenue-neutral, as this government says. They know they are paying more and they know they are getting less.

I think this needs to be said. I'm saying it here today because this debate affords me the opportunity to talk about budgets more than supply. I'm saying this because I think the government needs to hear this. We in the NDP believe that there are some simple solutions, and the simple solutions are: exempting hydro and home heating costs from harmonized sales tax; replacing the general corporate tax rates from the 2009 budget with jobs-focused refundable tax credits for capital investment, training and innovation—such credits would reward businesses for investing in and creating jobs; and, lastly, we need some kind of a fiscal framework that acknowledges the widespread belief by economists that sustained growth can assist us in the long run.

I want to leave a few minutes for my colleague, but I think that this government needs to start listening to the people. They need to start listening to the other voices. They need to get out of lockstep with the Harper government in Ottawa. They need to start thinking for themselves, because the people of Ontario are demanding much more than is being delivered. They are asking for fairness. They are asking for justice. They are asking for an economy and a budget that works for them. Unless this government delivers on that next week, I think they're going to have a far harder time dealing with the electorate of this province than they can possibly ever imagine.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon and talk about the Supply Act and concurrence. I thank the member from Beaches–East York for his comments—always a pleasure to listen to what he has to say.

I did look up "scintilla" while he was talking, and it does mean a tiny piece or a bit. So, thank you; that can be our word of the day.

Mr. Michael Prue: "Scintilla" is a good word.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: "Scintilla" is a very good word. When I looked it up, "prescience" was actually the word of the day, so there's another good one.

I did want to talk about the Supply Act in a succinct manner about exactly what the Supply Act does and the purpose of the Supply Act, and that's to authorize the expenditures for the current fiscal year up until March 31. So it's certainly not a wish list of things that opposition would like to see happen down the road or what they want to see. This is simply an act that will authorize expenditures for a variety of sums for the current fiscal year to March 31. I thought I would just be succinct and cover what this act is and what it allows the government to do for the people of Ontario and the services, and to protect public services in Ontario.

That said, the Supply Act is one of the cornerstone acts in the Legislature, and if passed, it gives the government, as I said, the necessary statutory authority to finance the required expenditures for the 2010-11 fiscal year. Supply gives the government the authority to finance the programs that the government has set out, to fulfill the commitments that are set out and, of course, to put the vision into practice. It has to be enacted for every fiscal year.

Interestingly enough, the Supply Act does not authorize any new spending. As I said, it's for all the expenditures that have occurred during 2010-11. Of course, without this necessary spending, the government would be unable to meet its obligations to the people of Ontario.

At present, temporary authority to spend for the fiscal year ending March 31, of course pending the voting of the supply, is provided through three things: It's provided through the Interim Appropriation for 2010-2011 Act, the Supplementary Interim Appropriation Act, 2010, and thirdly, the Supplementary Interim Appropriation Act, 2010 (No. 2). These statutes of course only provide temporary spending authority and are expected to be repealed if the Supply Act is passed.

On March 29, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, will table this government's eighth provincial budget. The 2011 budget will build on the progress that has been achieved since 2003, and it will also put measures in place to protect our education and health care systems as our economy returns to balance.

Ontario is emerging, as we know, from a global economic recession. While all major economic indicators have improved from lows during the recession, Ontario's families and businesses are still feeling the effects of the global financial and economic crisis.

Despite the severity of the recession's impact on employment, Ontario has now recovered 91% of the jobs lost compared to just 15% in the United States. Since May 2009, Ontario employment has increased by more than 230,000 new jobs, and 84% of those are full-time.

Other indicators show that our economy is in fact rebounding. Manufacturing sales are almost 30% higher than the low that was recorded in May 2009. Auto sales in 2010 were up over 8%, and, of course, consumer confidence has surged over 20% in the last two months alone.

Our plan for the economy is all about giving the people of Ontario what they need to succeed. Of course, that's why we continue to improve on the fundamentals of our society, which are, as we know, education, health care, infrastructure, electricity and taxes.

The most important thing we can do to build a globally competitive workforce is to invest in our people and provide them with the best possible skills training and education that we can, and that's why we're committed to our ongoing investments in education. Under our government, 200,000 more post-secondary spaces have been created, student assistance has been doubled, and full-day kindergarten is in place in hundreds of Ontario's elementary schools. As of last September, approximately 600 schools are offering full-day kindergarten. By 2014, all 4,000 elementary schools in Ontario

will offer full-day kindergarten. It's the first program of its kind in North America.

A strong start in education makes for a strong finish. If you give children great early learning opportunities, they're much more likely to be successful in the long run: to finish high school, to go to college or university, to finish an apprenticeship, to get a good job, to enjoy a good standard of living and to become contributing, productive citizens. All this starts in the earliest years, and that's why it's so important that we move ahead with full-day kindergarten.

The investments we've made in education since 2003 are producing real results. The EQAO is the Education Quality and Accountability Office. That's a separate, independent, arm's-length agency responsible for testing and evaluating the level of results that our students are acquiring. The EQAO says that in 2003, 54% of our students were meeting the Ontario standard, which is 70%. This is actually a very high standard relative to other provinces when it comes to their standardized testing results. Since then, our results have improved 14 points, to 68%. That's real progress, but our goal is to get to 75%. In 2003, graduation rates were 68%; today they're 79%. We're up 11 points. Again, that represents real, measurable progress, and as I said, our goal is to get to 85%.

To be sure, you need more than just a smart workforce; you need a healthy workforce. A healthy workforce is a productive workforce, and our continuing investments in public health care provide the medical care and assistance to keep Ontario healthy. We have a plan to protect our public health care system, to ensure that the people of Ontario continue to receive the range and the quality of care that they need. We've built 18 more hospitals. We've hired about 10,000 more nurses and 2,900 more doctors; 107 of those doctors have graduated from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, which our government opened in 2005. We have 200 family health teams working across the province, and we have introduced nurse practitioner clinics, the first of their kind in North America.

These investments and initiatives have brought in concrete results: 1.2 million more people in Ontario have a family doctor. Our government introduced the wait-time strategy. We're actively reducing wait times. That means patients have faster access to potentially life-saving service such as cancer surgery, hip replacements and CT scans.

Our infrastructure investments are supporting health and education systems and other programs and services that the people of Ontario value most. When we came to office, our province's infrastructure had been neglected for many years. Our government laid out a prudent and responsible plan to invest in strong, modern infrastructure, and that plan is delivering results. So far, we've built 18 hospitals, 400 schools, new bridges, sewers, public transit, high-speed Internet, recreation centres, and thousands and thousands of kilometres of roads. Our government's investments are protecting the environment, creating jobs and improving our electricity system.

Improving our electricity system, of course, is vital to our economic growth. A strong economy cannot exist, of course, without its electricity supply.

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As we know, previous governments made little investment in new electricity supply and transmission infrastructure. By 2003, Ontarians didn't even know if the lights would stay on. The previous government's reliance on five coal plants meant that about 25% of electricity came from dirty coal, and there was no plan for conservation, no plan for supply to keep up with demand. An interesting fact: The electricity system lost 1,800 megawatts of power capacity. That's the equivalent to Niagara Falls running dry. A brief experiment in market deregulation in 2002 saw spot market energy prices spike an average of 30% over seven months, which prompted the PC government to freeze rates at an artificially low level.

Since taking office, our government has made the long-overdue investments in the electricity system infrastructure that were needed to make sure the lights stay on. We're creating a clean, modern, reliable energy system that, of course, is attracting new investment to the province and creating jobs.

Our government is phasing out coal-fired generation, replacing it with cleaner generation which is improving the quality of air we breathe and reducing health care costs. So far, we've built 8,000 megawatts of new generation. We've upgraded 5,000 kilometres of transmission. We've increased the number of wind turbines from 10 to more than 700. We have thousands of solar energy projects across the province, 8,000 of which involve partnerships with our Ontario farmers.

The Ministry of the Environment recently filed its 39th annual report. This report says that our air is getting cleaner. It's tied to the fact that we're shutting down coal-fired generation in Ontario. So far, we've shut down eight coal-fired plants—the equivalent of taking 2.5 million cars off the road—and there are 11 more plants to go. We remain firmly committed to shutting all of them down.

The work we're doing to improve Ontario's electricity supply means we will have clean, reliable energy for years to come. It also means tens of thousands of jobs are being created, including an estimated 45,000 jobs in 2011 and over 60,000 jobs in 2012. While absolutely necessary, these investments are increasing electricity costs, which is why we've introduced the Ontario clean energy benefit. As of January 1st, the Ontario clean energy benefit is reducing after-tax electricity bills by 10% over the next five years. This is directly supporting four million residential consumers and more than 400,000 small businesses and farms. A typical household will save more than $150 a year. Small businesses will save $1,700 a year, and farms over $2,000 a year.

The Ontario clean energy benefit is just one of a series of programs that we've put in place to help families and businesses with their electricity costs. Other programs include the Ontario energy and property tax credit, the northern Ontario energy credit, and the northern industrial electricity rate program.

The government's tax plan for jobs and growth is transforming Ontario into one of the most tax-competitive jurisdictions in the industrialized world for new business investment. The plan that we put in place has replaced the outdated retail sales tax with a modern value-added tax. Moving to the HST was the single most important thing we can do to create jobs and position the economy for future growth. It's making Ontario more competitive in the global economy by removing hidden layers of provincial sales tax.

Our tax plan also provides significant relief to Ontarians and their families. As of January 1, 2010, 93% of Ontario income tax payers are paying less tax, and 90,000 low-income Ontarians are no longer paying personal income tax. The average family will see an income tax cut of $355 this year and every year going forward. The tax plan is providing Ontarians with $12 billion in relief over three years. This includes three transition checks for eligible Ontarians totalling $1,000 for families, $300 for singles and $260 permanent sales tax credits each year for every low- and middle-income adult and child.

We've also introduced the children's activity tax credit to help parents with the cost of enrolling their children in activities that encourage them to be healthy and to be active. Parents and guardians can receive a refundable tax credit worth up to $50 per child under 16 years of age or up to $100 for a child with a disability up to the age of 18 years. Because the credit is refundable, low-income parents who pay little or no income tax also benefit. The maximum amounts that may be claimed for the credit will also rise annually with the cost of living through indexation.

This new, permanent tax credit will provide about $75 million each year to assist with the costs of enrolling children in extracurricular activities and it will benefit over 1.8 million children in about 1.1 million Ontario households.

Over all, more than two thirds of consumers are better off under the new tax package. We estimate that consumers will save a total of $490 million in 2013. Our tax plan is helping our businesses save money and, in turn, supporting new investments and new jobs.

The HST is saving Ontario businesses more than $500 million per year in paperwork costs. We also cut Ontario's tax rate on new business investment by half. In the third quarter, business spending on machinery and equipment has increased more than 10%. Under the new tax system, a typical Ontario restaurant is paying 67% less in provincial corporate and sales taxes, and a typical manufacturer will save 89%. These savings are good for business, good for investment and good for jobs.

A recent report confirms that Ontario businesses are passing on sales tax savings to Ontarians at a much faster pace than was originally estimated. Michael Smart, Canada's leading economic expert on the impacts of sales tax harmonization, finds that about two thirds of the new input tax credits given to businesses have been passed on to Ontarians in the form of lower consumer prices. Further savings are expected to be passed on to consumers over time.

Along with our plan to create jobs, boost long-term economic growth and protect the progress that Ontarians have made in their schools and hospitals, our government has a prudent and responsible plan to reduce borrowing, cut spending and eliminate the deficit caused by the global recession.

When we came to power in 2003, we invested a hidden $5.6-billion deficit that the previous Progressive Conservative government left. We eliminated this deficit ahead of schedule and then posted three consecutive balanced budgets. Then the global recession hit. We chose to lessen the impact on Ontarians through short-term stimulus investments and to protect our other public services. As a result, we have a deficit. Our current deficit projection of $18.7 billion in 2010-11 is almost 25% lower than the $24.7-billion deficit projected one year ago and a $1-billion improvement over the 2010 budget projection.

We're also borrowing $2 billion less than forecast in the 2010 budget due to the $1-billion decline in the projected deficit and the $1-billion payment to the province from the Teranet agreement. We're tackling the deficit through strong fiscal and expenditure management. Ontario has the third-lowest program spending per capita in Canada, and our per capita spending on government services is the second lowest of all provinces.

We've also recently announced several new measures to generate annual savings. This includes cutting or merging 14 government agencies, a proposed ban on all perks in the broader public sector and $260 million in potential savings from a comprehensive review of all government programs and services. Furthermore, we're on track to reducing the size of the Ontario public service by 5% and have reduced consulting expenditures over 50% since 2003. We also reduced travel expenses by $30 million, or 24%, last year, with an additional $10 million to be saved this year.

Through the McGuinty government's investments since 2003, we've invested to protect health care and education. We've invested in a modern infrastructure, promoted a greener Ontario and lower business costs, and we've protected and enhanced programs and services for Ontarians. These investments continue to strengthen Ontario's economy, enhance our competitive advantage and, of course, create jobs.

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The upcoming 2011 budget will continue to build on this track record of strong support for Ontario families, businesses and communities. It will strengthen Open Ontario, the McGuinty government's five-year plan to create new opportunities for jobs and economic growth. It will build on the progress that we are making towards returning the economy to balance. It will lay out the measures to manage spending, eliminate the deficit and secure the province's long-term financial sustainability.

For all of the reasons above, I hope that all members of the House will see the need to support the Supply Act. I look forward to ongoing debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm pleased to rise to discuss for a while some of the issues that feed into the government's management of money, which is, after all, what a supply bill addresses. I think we'll be voting for it because we, too, believe that at the end of the day the people who work for this government deserve their paycheque, and that's what a supply bill assures.

But this government has to be held to account. This government is all about money. I listened with interest to my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga rhyming off a long, long list of what she believes are accomplishments of this government. You've got to do it with more enthusiasm, though, I would say to my friend, because then I might even buy into some of this stuff. Listening to it rattled off that way, I'm not sure that I do.

Here's what I am sure of: I had lunch at McDonald's today and I made sure to order the McGuinty value meal. That's the one that's the most expensive thing on the menu, but the guy behind you pays.

Laughter.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes, it's an attempt at humour, but the point I'm trying to make here is that the McGuinty government is about that, and when you start to rhyme off lists of things that you've accomplished, you have to remember who put a hand in their pocket to accomplish what you believe are the successes that you've scored.

That member from Kitchener–Conestoga, for example, is one of the members who debated and voted against my Bill 143 two weeks ago, which was a bill that was supported by all three parties, originally, and a bill that would have helped seniors, who are arguably the hardest hit in our population, defer property taxes of up to $5,000 per year. But she didn't support it, and she didn't by reading a list of reasons why, the same way she did today on the supply bill, and I don't think that she really believes what she's saying.

We'll dispense with that and we'll get on with my premise, which really places the onus on this government to account for how it handles money. This government, from that perspective, is not respectful of Ontario families. It decides on a program that's good for all of them, takes the money for them to pay for these programs and then says, "Look what we've done." That's an inappropriate approach because it doesn't reflect either what Ontario families necessarily want—they didn't get a four-year mandate to do anything they liked—or, given the times, what Ontario families need, because Ontario families needed some change very radically over the course of the past four years.

I'd like to focus for a moment on issues in my own riding of Thornhill. I've said in this Legislature many times that there is a clear-cut disparity owing to the lack of a proper funding formula for the delivery of health care services between the 416 and the 905. Simply by living on one side of Steeles Avenue at the north end of Toronto, or the other side of it at the south end of York region, the medical expenditures on a per capita basis vary by a significant amount and a significant percentage.

If you live in Toronto, 416, the average amount spent on you is somewhere in the $950-per-year range. If you live in York region, Thornhill, it's about $200 less—about $750 per capita. Why would that be? Well, the main reason is because of the huge growth in York region vis-à-vis Toronto, which has not sustained that kind of growth.

The fact of the matter is, there is an inappropriate approach to a funding formula that has to look at the real needs of a community on that basis.

I will cite some figures. Thornhill has a growing population. Thornhill spans significant pieces of two significant municipalities; one is Markham and one is Vaughan. The fastest-growth-rate areas of the province happen to be where? In Markham and Vaughan. The growth rate in Vaughan is 30%; in Markham, 20%. You can't come close to that anywhere else.

I want to move from one area, the health care funding that I've just specified, and look at social services. Social services representatives, including a representative mom, came to see me last week. I've seen these people basically for four years running now, and it's always the same. They look pained in terms of how they approach me because there's always this belief that any MPP has some sweeping powers and can make things change, when we all know that regardless of whether we're on this side of the House or the government side of the House, all we can do is bring the concerns to this House and see if we can do something about it.

Social services, in an area of growth, are suffering in the same, if not a worse way than health services in York region, and I'll cite the numbers here as well. Children's services under social service funding to this riding have nowhere near increased parallel to the population. As a matter of fact, York region sustains allocation for children's services of $127 per capita per annum versus the provincial average of $221. So ask yourself, when you hear me say that, how you even begin to consider supplying the social services required for needy children—and I don't mean just in the poverty sense, albeit that is true, too—in York region versus what you're doing in the rest of the province. It's almost impossible, and many in the children's services sector are convinced that essentially the crisis they have been apprehending has now arrived. They can't treat autistic kids. They can't treat kids with all kinds of problems. They just can't do it. So, it's not a question of wait-lists. It's a question of, where's the money coming from? We just don't have it, and this can't continue any longer. It just can't.

Children's services intervention people, coordinators and administrators have all approached me with their concerns, and they've got a mixture of problems. Obviously, the major one is severe underfunding, and a bit of political roulette that seems to be a very significant piece of the pie or piece of the puzzle right now.

Ministries switched in terms of who has the authority over children's services as it pertained to mental health

services—a very, very crucial issue. Formerly, it came under the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and has now moved to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. What happens is, it falls between stools and, over the course of approximately the last 15 years, according to the people I'm talking to, they've sustained only two funding increases. We're talking many years ago, and not sustainable funding increases, nothing that they can really count on.

Going back to children's aid and an issue that arose last year, the member from York–Simcoe, the member from Newmarket–Aurora and myself—all York region Conservative opposition members—made a fairly major fuss about the fact that children's aid was not only getting no increase but was being cut last year. Thank goodness, the fuss we made was enough to get the funding restored, but only restored to former levels. So children's aid couldn't do its job and children's mental health is suffering. We've got a problem in York region that comes from a disparity in funding.

I wanted to put that on the record because it has to be on the record somewhere. My friend from Beaches–East York, in debate about half an hour ago, talked about this government doing the right thing. So, where I can listen to a Liberal member like the member from Kitchener–Conestoga talk about all of these things she believes the government has scored points on, and then I listen to the member from Beaches–East York saying, "I defy the government to ante up when it comes to poverty," I, too, have a problem.

But I can say, unlike what sounded like a positively oriented incitement to the government to do something on the part of the member from Beaches–East York, I fear that we're not going to see any change—not in the budget next week and certainly not between now and the election slated for October 6. I fear, as well, that the fallout from that will be faced by the next government, and I expect that to be a government made up of people from this side of the House.

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Let me move on to another issue that affects people in York region that I also wanted to get on the record. Speaking of election campaigns, there was an election campaign in 2007, and my opponent at the time, the Liberal incumbent, ran on a promise that the McGuinty government would extend the subway line—this is the Yonge Street subway line—from Finch Avenue right up into the heart of York region. Indeed, that was placed on a list of priorities for the GTA by Metrolinx. It was unfortunately at a price of $3 billion to $3.5 billion—not considered a priority that was right for the times, not then, not since. That's a subway line that has to be built. That was an empty promise coming from the Liberal side. That was part of MoveOntario 2020. I can tell you that on the question of extending the subway under Yonge Street, if you could put the shovels in the ground this afternoon, you wouldn't be cutting any ribbons until 2020 or after. That's what it takes to build a subway. So I want to see that happen.

The transit infrastructure in the GTA and in the province as a whole is in dismal shape—we know that—because it's been left fallow for years. If I were asking this question in question period of the Minister of Transportation across the way, what I'd get back is a tirade about what some government 15 years ago under somebody named Harris might or might not have done, because they like to cite history. I'm concerned with history over the last eight years; I'm concerned with promises made, promises broken; I'm concerned with what you consider to be your record over there; and I'm concerned with your ability to continue. Transit infrastructure in the GTA: something that has gone sadly lacking.

Transit needs to be expanded, but it needs to be done in an equitable and in a manageable fashion, not every time you feel a need—"There's an election coming up. We'll throw you a subway car," that kind of thing.

It is apparent that wherever and whenever transit infrastructure is expanded and is modernized, there is an automatic commercial expansion that takes place. There's no question that the Yonge Street corridor going up past Richmond Hill is an area that in all official plans—York region, the town of Markham, the city of Vaughan, up in Richmond Hill—is planned for intensification. Some of it's already started. If there were a subway announced, there would be an awful lot more. It's something that's been urgent for a number of years now. It's not a question of if, but when, and the "when" has never been when anybody said.

It is really a function of Metrolinx—and we have to look at what Metrolinx is. Metrolinx has been basically using taxpayer dollars to produce supposed projects for transit improvement, but really, there's so little to show for it at this point. So I'm anxious for next week's budget to see what the promises are this time. I hope there's some money for York Region Transit, but I'm not holding my breath.

Vaughan hospital would be another example of infrastructure that is way overdue. We've been talking about it for six years. There's a very vibrant grassroots organization that has raised well in excess of $1 million per year, and then more by private donation. There's been an assessment placed on the property tax bills for citizens of Vaughan for the last number of years for that as well. The city of Vaughan has purchased land for that hospital so it has a place to live. There's been money allocated by the Ministry of Health under—and this is how far back it goes—then-Health Minister George Smitherman to do initial studies, then an additional $5 million to do master planning. Most recently, Minister Fantino of the federal government came in and promised 15 million federal dollars. This was unheard of, that federal money should be allocated towards a hospital. He said that he could do it in his campaign, and then he went and did it. Now, I challenge the Liberal government of the day to create that hospital. Let's just see if you're going to do it as an election promise. Again, goodness knows it's needed, and that forms part of—I'm relating back now—the business of whether you fund people in

the 905 in York region in the same way that you fund the 416.

Lastly, before I sit down and yield the floor to my friend, Concord West Ratepayers Association is a very interesting grassroots group in the western part of my riding. This community takes the initiative themselves to bring about change. They want to give input on how growth plans and other projects will impact their lives. I read a petition for the first time into the record today.

Community organizations are there to ensure that their community is enhanced, and what I want to say about these people is that they've been around for many years. They've lived in their homes for 40 years. They moved out to that area at the western side of my riding of Thornhill with a view to nature. They could walk in fields and on paths. They weren't surrounded by anything. Now they've got the 407 to the south, they've got an industrial park to the east, they've got an expanded Highway 7 and infrastructure being built to the north, and they've got one area that's been left to them. Now they've been told that there will ultimately be a transitway built up the centre of the 407 and that right next to their homes there will be a hub for that transitway, a carpark for thousands of cars, and a stop for a new, expanded GO service. Yes, that may not happen, ultimately, until some time after 2020, but it's been earmarked, so it changes the scope of their homes.

Let me tell you how intensely devoted to their homes they are. If you think about it, that probably makes the homes more valuable because of their proximity to this great mass transit, but they don't think of it that way. They wanted their peace and their quiet. They had their peace and their quiet. The government wouldn't listen to them, even though they engaged professionals to come up with alternative plans. So they've now started a grassroots campaign. They have written a letter to Premier McGuinty. They have started writing petitions. They have met with municipal groups. All they really want is to have the ORC land there transferred to the Toronto conservation authority so that they can make the appropriate changes.

It's a great idea. It's something that should be granted to them. Again, it's an example of people who are, for the most part, moving towards the elderly range of the age scale, who want to do something for themselves to preserve their way of life.

The McGuinty government is about money. Any time I ask a question in this House, or any of my colleagues ask a question, we get a money answer: "We've spent this much on this and that much on that and we're going to spend this much on the next thing." Start listening to people. Yes, we'll vote for your supply bill. That's not the issue. But the money is the issue, and the money is really a means by which you address the way of life that people have. They have a right to some of their own choices, and you haven't given them the opportunity to make those choices.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I only have a few minutes left, but I only need a couple of minutes to make the points I want to make.

Whenever I tell people from my constituency that I'm going to be speaking on a supply bill and you can raise whatever issues you want during this time, invariably what people have been saying over the last year or so is, "We want you to raise two issues: one, what is happening to our hydro bill, and two, the HST."

Most people in my constituency, and we receive calls virtually weekly, are seeing increases in their hydro bills of $100 a month, $150 a month. So even being cautious about it, people are being told to fork over an additional $1,200 a year for something essential—hydroelectricity—and that's excluding the HST. That's just a $100-a-month or $150-a-month increase to the hydro bill alone. Then you stack on the HST, and for people that's $1,200 a year.

This government has boasted over and over again about how good the HST is going to be for people. You know, Manitoba did a study of this at the same time and rejected the HST. They looked at, first of all, "Is this going to help business?" They concluded that "competitiveness gains, particularly for those sectors exposed to export competition, are very modest," that "relative tax competitiveness ranking of Manitoba manufacturers against other competing cities would not improve with an HST," and "a very large part of the savings to business would not directly or significantly improve the competitive position of the export sector." Sales tax harmonization "is just one dimension of overall tax competitiveness and must be considered in the context of other tax measures."

Then they considered what would happen to people. What they found is that ordinary people would be paying a lot more taxes. In fact, StatsCan has said that middle-income families in Ontario are paying an additional $823 a year through the HST. So I add it up: $1,200 a year more on the hydro bill and over $800 a year more on the HST. People are being asked to pay $2,000 more a year, but their incomes aren't going up; in fact, if anything, people's incomes are going down. And that's the question that I hope Liberal members are able to answer six months from now: How do you expect people to pay $2,000 a year more when they have less income?

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: Before I get into my remarks, I want to mention the previous two Progressive Conservative speakers: first, the member for Thornhill, Peter Shurman. I want to congratulate the member for Thornhill for his private member's bill a couple of weeks ago, Bill 143. I think he really hit the nail on the head when he wanted to provide the opportunity to help seniors, and I'm so disappointed. Originally, we felt that it was something that all parties could vote for, and ultimately the government whipped the vote and turned it down. It was very tragic, because I really believe that the member

had an excellent initiative. He should be commended for standing up for seniors, and I wish the government had done the same that day. It's tragic.

I also want to mention our PC finance critic, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Norm Miller, who spoke first and led off our party's discussions. I was glad that he talked about what we heard at some of the pre-budget consultations from industry leaders and hard-working Ontarians. They gave our caucus some great suggestions on how to get Ontario moving again.

Really, I think all I've heard since I was elected to sit in this place is that people simply can't afford the skyrocketing costs of living in Ontario, whether it be the crazy hydro rates that they're paying—and I'm going to get into some examples of what it's like in the rural riding that I live in, in eastern Ontario. As the months unfold leading up to October, I truly believe that what people want is real relief and change, and I think we're hearing that over and over again.

I also want to mention the press conference that our leader, Tim Hudak, had pre-budget, where he talked about our three key points that we hope will be in the budget: tax relief, focused government spending, and a stimulation of private sector jobs and private sector job creation.

In terms of focusing government spending, certainly the two examples he mentioned that day, which I believe we've talked about on a number of occasions—obviously I think it's important that we put as much money into front-line health care as possible. Certainly, I have an issue with LHINs, and I'm going to talk, if I have enough time, about a specific example that I can't believe; and also the fact that there's a need to have some form of sunset review of agencies to make sure they justify their existence, that they don't just keep operating without that.

But first, last night the council of the municipality of North Grenville passed a motion, and I want to thank Mayor Dave Gordon, Deputy Mayor Ken Finnerty and Councillors Barb Tobin, Terry Butler and Tim Sutton on a resolution. They have a fabulous service in North Grenville, the North Grenville Accessible Transportation organization, NGAT to use its initials. I was there last year at a Trillium application where we were able to replace one of their vehicles, a 1999 vehicle that had served the municipality well, and the Trillium grant allowed them to purchase a 2010 Ford bus.

This is a group that's been in existence for 11 years, founded with the support of the municipality, groups like the United Way, local service clubs and individuals. They received a grant from the United Way and the municipality. Obviously, in a rural municipality they don't have a transit system. They rely on this not-for-profit group to provide accessible transit service, and I can't overstate the need for that type of service in a rural economy, in a rural riding, where mobility is such an important aspect. They passed a motion last night to ask that that the government consider a funding model that would help municipalities, certainly something that our leader, Tim Hudak, heard recently at ROMA. I think he delivered a bang-on speech about the need for rural infrastructure to be supported. I'm glad that the municipality passed that motion. I'm glad that they sent to it me, and I'll certainly be advocating for them.

I want to go back to government agencies. The one example I'm going to use is MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., and I'm dealing with a great foundation—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Just be quiet for a minute. You're going to learn something here.

An Ontario Trillium grant provided this wonderful non-profit organization, the Spencerville Mill, with $100,000. We had a great opening back in the fall. The mill is a wonderful space, run by volunteers, not-for-profit. It basically tells the story of the mill and the history of the Spencerville community. It's a heritage building. It connects us with the past and teaches children who go through it of our proud history, showing that that mill was the cornerstone of starting that community. Also, in the winter, A Country Christmas Remembered is the focal point at the Spencerville Mill.

As I said, it was the foundation of the community back in 1811 when Peleg Spencer first built a sawmill. It was destroyed by fire and replaced around 1884. Certainly, we're very blessed that we don't have ruins or photographs but a real building, a real working mill that provides much for history in our community.

However, MPAC classifies that not as a museum, not as a residence, but as a commercial building, even though no commercial revenue is there. In fact, their changes in their assessment—I think that now they pay a couple of hundred bucks; now they're going to be paying $3,000, I believe.

Let me read you something. They went to MPAC to try to change it from the classification which allows under the act that "land not be used for residential purposes that is owned or occupied by a non-profit service organization, a non-profit private club, a non-profit cultural organization."

The Ministry of Culture funds libraries, it funds museums. However, in the MPAC letter: "The foundation is not a cultural organization in that they do not provide cultural activities for Canadians of a specific ethnic origin." So it's classified as a commercial operation. In fact, when they wrote to MPAC, they were basically told, "If you don't like it, go to court."

So there's a situation where a cultural operation, one that certainly is in keeping with what the Ministry of Culture funds, yet, that agency has no discussion about changes.

In the remaining time, I also want to talk about another issue: smart meters. I know that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned it.

I had an email the other day from a lady, Valery Parkinson, who lives up in Oxford Mills, one of the rural areas of my riding. She wrote me on St. Paddy's Day—sent me an email—and was quoting the media in Ottawa

that day that Ottawa Hydro, with over 300,000 customers, has installed smart meters for only about 45,000 of their customers, and they were requesting an extension to the June deadline to have all customers online.

But as a rural hydro user, most of my riding already has smart meters installed at various points of connection.

To give you a heads-up on what we're facing, Valery is a typical rural user. She uses electricity for her necessities. She's got an oil furnace. She's got a wood stove. She uses electricity to illuminate her outbuildings because of wildlife, to bring water into her home, to operate her sump pump.

She went to hydro and asked to do that online examination of her profile. It showed that about three quarters of her usage was in the low to mid-peak range. About 23%, I think, was mid-peak usage. About 25%, which essentially was just her household necessities, was determined to be in that peak period. She estimates that her $250 monthly bill, when you deal with the 6.5 cents a kilowatt hour going to 9.9 cents—when her time-of-use meter is clicked on, on April 6, 2011, she's going to have a 30% increase.

So when we talk about smart meters and when we say that—the House leader today in his question talked about how 75% of people in Ontario have had an increase in their hydro bill, and about 100% if they have a smart meter. There's an example of what we're faced with in rural Ontario. This isn't the first communication from a constituent that I've brought forward. I've brought forward many of them. I have other communications today that I would love to read into the record.

Just to close, I want to talk about the government House leader. She used the words, "This puts our vision into practice." I remember that quote earlier because certainly the examples that I've given today about her vision—when I see ideas like smart meters, issues that I have highlighted today, there's no vision.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Seeing none, I will now put the questions.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Government Services, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Revenue, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, including supplementaries, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply more the Cabinet Office, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motions agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): On the motion for second reading of Bill 167, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, Ms. Smith has moved second reading of the bill. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

SUPPLY ACT, 2011

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2011

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011 / Projet de loi 167, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2011.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be titled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business at this time. I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Thank you.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1734.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
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Wednesday 23 March 2011

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Mercredi 23 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments? Further debate?

M^me^ France Gélinas: You had me a little bit worried there with questions and comments, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to add my voice to the debate on the Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, Bill 160.

I am worried about some of what's in this bill. Of course, not all of it is worrisome; some of it is things that I could support. But some, especially when it has to do with the prevention council and officer, leaves me very uncomfortable. Basically, what I'm worried about is the new structure. The way it will work is that the Ministry of Labour will be directly responsible for the prevention officer's work, for the budget of his office and his council, and, ultimately, for what they do. I see this direct link as sometimes being something good, but sometimes being something bad.

I would much rather see a more arm's-length type of a relationship for a prevention officer that would give the prevention officer the opportunity to go public, to not only report directly to the minister, which basically means that some of the recommendations the rest of us may never know, the rest of us may never see. He or she would report to the minister, and basically it would be the minister, with the help of his or her colleagues, who would decide what the rest of us see, what gets implemented, what gets worked upon and what gets buried. When it comes to health and safety, to me, this is not the way to go. Transparency, accountability, the opportunity to see it all: This is what brings confidence into the system; this is what basically, ultimately, will lead to the best health and safety for all of the workers of Ontario.

At the end of the day, I think the direction of the bill is a direction we can all support. We all want everybody to come home safe after their shift; there's no doubt about this. We all want our workers to work safely and go back to their families, friends and loved ones at the end of the workday, workweek, etc.

The direction is good. It's how we get there. How do we maximize this? How do we make sure that if there are best practices learned, if there are lessons learned, those lessons are shared, even if they don't really please whoever happens to be in government at the time, even if it doesn't please whoever happens to be Minister of Labour at the time? This can only happen if you have some kind of arm's-length relationship, if this officer has an opportunity to go public to show whatever report or whatever is learned—there should be an opportunity for all of us in this House to see it.

I can't help but draw a comparison with the French language commissioner. We in the French community, and in all of Ontario, are very happy that the position of French Language Services Commissioner has been put in place. Mr. Boileau has done a fantastic job for the people of Ontario in doing investigations and bringing forward his reports. His relationship is very similar to what we're about to create. He reports to the minister responsible for francophone affairs, but he often reports about issues that are outside her ministry, and then we sort of run into trouble.

I can give you the example where he did a special report on Peel-Halton French language services. This special report was well received. It gave concrete and achievable recommendations with deadlines, and his report was submitted to the minister. The report was made public; I was able to read it and so was everybody else. The problem became that the deadline was December 31, 2010, which has passed, and his recommendations were not acted upon and we did not see the action we should have seen. Frankly, there is very little I can do and very little anybody else, besides the minister in charge, can do.

We are about to set up the exact, same reporting relationship that we already know is troublesome in other ministries, if we talk about francophone affairs. Why would we want to set up something like this when experience has already shown us that it doesn't work in the best interests of the people of Ontario?

I would like that changed. I want whatever is learned to be shared with everybody, whether the minister of the day agrees with it or not. The chief prevention officer should do the work pretty much the way that it is described in the bill, but I would suggest that he or she report back to this Legislative Assembly—that he or she report back to all of us—so that we know the work that has been done, the recommendations that have been written and the favoured path forward, and together we can ensure that health and safety are priorities and the recommendations are acted upon. Because at the end of the day, we all want the same thing: We want our workers to go home safely after their shift.

Why is it that we have a new bill in front of us that would choose to use a structure that has been tried before and been found to be less than perfect? We know there are better reporting mechanisms out there that would lead to better outcomes and to better quality health and safety at the end of the day.

It is troublesome, and it is something that I hope the government will look upon seriously. It's something that is easily changed. We're talking about changing a reporting relationship that brings transparency and accountability, and that strengthens the health and safety of everyone in Ontario. We are here to serve the people of Ontario. Why not put forward bills that use best practices, that use the experience we have to make sure we end up with the best possible health and safety bill that could be and we move forward in a way that assures us, no matter which government is in power—because we know it will change over the years—no matter who is minister—because, again, we know they will change over the years.

0910

Not everybody looks at health and safety in the same way. Every party represented in this House look at health and safety through a separate lens with different results at the end. The prevention council and the chief prevention officer will stay there. They will continue to do their work. They will become experts in the field and develop best practices. But if those best practices have to be put through a minister and a party that have their own lens as to what health and safety should look like in this province, then we may, at the end of those filters, not end up with the ultimate health and safety for everyone in Ontario. I truly believe that every worker in Ontario should be protected by the best laws. They should be protected by the best structure that will lead to the best outcome, which is a safe worker who goes back to his or her family, friends and loved ones at the end of the day.

There are so many issues that are contentious when you talk about health and safety. I have people coming to my constituency office—and I'm sure you do too—about health and safety. When we look to occupational diseases in Ontario, a lot of changes have taken place. A lot of people are slowly but surely being successful in taking bits and pieces of protection away from our workers, and they do this by reinterpreting the wording of our laws.

Here in Ontario, we cannot take legal action against an employer for damages. What we do is put in a WSIB claim. If you're a worker who works in a workplace that is covered by WSIB, the right to take legal action has been taken away, but in exchange for this, we have put into place WSIB, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. If a claim has been accepted and you become eligible for non-economic loss—known as NEL—or loss of earnings—known as LOE—or survivor benefits, if you pass away, or other expenses, all of this is what we traded away. You traded away the right to take legal action because WSIB gives you protection.

The problem is that the words we put into those laws are now being used against them to the point where you start to wonder what a worker's life is worth. In some of the results we see, it's really troublesome.

We have seen that the loss of earnings has really been looked into and has been analyzed with the worst possible outcome for workers. When the law was put forward, when this assembly—other people than me—voted on those laws, they were clear that if there was to be a loss of income because somebody was injured, then the worker should be compensated. But then you start to look at if somebody is so sick because of what has happened to him or her at work, and decides to take their pension because they have a physically demanding job and just can't cope anymore, it won't be deemed a loss of income, because pensions are not income; they're earnings.

I know that lawyers love this stuff, and it allows them to take as much money away from the workers as possible, but at the end of the day it is wrong. If we don't craft our bills in a way that really thinks about all of the possibilities, then we end up with things like this: We end up with lawyers arguing about the meanings of words to make sure that at the end of the day the workers don't get their non-economic loss, they don't get their loss of earnings, and sometimes the widow or widower doesn't get their survivor's benefits either.

I would very much like us to work together on this and to really think it through—to think it through as to, if we all agree that accountability and transparency is one of the basics for good-quality outcomes of any bills, then this bill needs to change. This bill needs to take into account the fact that the reporting relationship we have set up right now is troublesome and could end up with working against the best outcomes.

Je voulais mentionner que, bien que je sois en faveur de la direction générale de ce projet de loi qui cherche à améliorer les conditions des travailleurs face à la santé et la sécurité au travail, j'ai également, vraiment, des réservations sérieuses.

La première, c'est que la nouvelle position d'officier de prévention est une position qui va se rapporter directement au ministre du Travail. Ça veut dire que, peu importe la qualité de son investigation, peu importe la

qualité du travail de cet officier et de son bureau, nous, à l'Assemblée, ne verrons jamais le résultat de son travail, à moins que la ou le ministre du Travail ne décide de le partager et de le rendre public.

Ça, c'est dangereux. Je ne peux pas m'empêcher de montrer le parallèle qui existe avec le commissaire aux services en français. On a un commissaire aux services en français en Ontario, M. François Boileau, et tout le monde est bien heureux de cette position-là. On est très satisfait de son travail et on est très satisfait également des rapports qu'il nous a fournis.

Le problème, c'est que M. Boileau, lorsqu'il fait ses rapports, les soumet à la ministre déléguée aux services en français, et c'est la ministre déléguée aux services en français qui décide s'il y aura un suivi, si on va respecter les recommandations ou si on va les envoyer aux oubliettes ou les mettre sur une tablette quelque part pour accumuler de la poussière.

Je raconte le parallèle parce que c'est ce qu'on est en train de mettre en place avec le nouveau projet de loi 160. Avec le nouveau projet de loi 160, on va créer une autre position équivalente à celle du commissaire, un officier qui va se rapporter directement au ministre du Travail.

Je peux donner l'exemple du commissaire aux services en français qui nous a soumis un rapport spécial par rapport à l'accès aux services de santé en français pour la population de Peel et Halton. Dans son rapport, il fait une très bonne analyse de la situation. C'est une population qui a travaillé pendant des années pour avoir un centre de santé communautaire francophone, qui a soumis, qui a resoumis, qui a changé sa proposition autant comme autant, et qui ne vient pas à bout d'être reconnue.

Ils ont soumis une plainte au commissaire. Le commissaire a accepté la plainte, il a fait son rapport, il a fait des recommandations concrètes, et dans ses recommandations, il a mis des dates butoirs—entre autres, une date butoir du 31 décembre 2010, qui vient de passer. Malheureusement, la date butoir est arrivée, le travail n'a pas été fait, les suivis n'ont pas été faits, et les francophones de Peel et Halton n'ont toujours pas les services en français que la Loi 8 leur garantit.

0920

Je donne cet exemple parce que le même processus est en train d'être établi avec le projet de loi 160, et c'est un processus, on le sait, qui peut bien fonctionner, mais il y en a de meilleurs. Pourquoi est-ce qu'on ne met pas tout de suite, en partant, un processus qui nous permet d'avoir la meilleure façon de procéder?

Ce qui se passe en ce moment pour les francophones de Peel et Halton, c'est une recommandation, vraiment, qui s'adresse à la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. La ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, à la dernière minute, juste avant Noël, a dit qu'il se passerait quelque chose, mais à une date plus tard. Ça, c'est enlever beaucoup de pouvoir.

Il y a une pétition qui circule en ce moment qui demande à l'Assemblée législative de changer la façon dont le commissaire aux services en français fait ses rapports; que les rapports ne devraient pas aller à une ministre en particulier—dans ce cas-ci, la ministre déléguée aux services en français—mais que le commissaire devrait faire son rapport à l'ensemble des députés pour s'assurer que l'ensemble des députés—qu'on sait les recommandations qu'il a faites, qu'on connaît les dates butoirs et qu'on s'assure que les suivis sont faits.

C'est quelque chose qu'on est en train de vivre en ce moment en Ontario. Pourquoi est-ce qu'on est en train de mettre en place un autre projet de loi qui nous remet un rapport de liaison comme ça qui n'est pas le meilleur? On sait déjà que ça cause des problèmes dans d'autres ministères. Pourquoi est-ce qu'on est en train de mettre en place une structure quand on sait qu'il y a de meilleures structures qui existent et qui donnent de meilleurs résultats?

Nobody would argue that we all want health and safety laws in Ontario to be the best that they can. This bill needs to be changed if we want the best for our workers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to be able to comment for two minutes on the remarks that were made by the member from Nickel Belt.

I think she brought two excellent points, the first one being the reporting function. This bill is the result of a very detailed report called the Dean report, which was produced by an expert panel, nine people, and Mr. Tony Dean, who is a former Deputy Minister of Labour. They've recommended that the reporting function go to the Ministry of Labour. I think it's important that that function be that way, because that makes the minister directly responsible to this House. If someone from the opposition has an issue with what the chief prevention officer is doing or what the minister is doing or what the ministry is changing, that opportunity to keep them accountable is here in the House. Questions can be asked, and the opposition can question the Minister of Labour. So I think the reporting function is fine. It's also very transparent that way.

The other point that I wanted to respond to was the point brought up regarding transparency. It's quite clear in the Dean report that they wanted to achieve more transparency. The chief prevention officer has to get advice from his or her panel and then bring that to the minister. There's no hiding of anything here. I think it's very, very open.

The most important thing that this act and these changes achieve is system integration. The system will be more integrated this way, and the ministry will be able to function better. I think it's a good thing.

I think she made very good comments—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

The member for Nickel Belt, you have two minutes to respond.

M^me^ France Gélinas: I listened attentively to the member from Scarborough Southwest. We are fully aware

of the Dean report, fully aware of who the membership was and the hard work that they put into this report and that the bill is based, in part, on a response to what was in the report.

I guess it's how you define accountability and the reporting function. The reporting function to the minister: Yes, we can hold the minister accountable for what the minister chooses to share with us. But what goes on between an employee of a minister and the minister himself? This is not information that will be available to me. Only what the ministers decide to share and make public will be accountable to me. What I want is that this position will help toward more system integration and will develop best practices. It's not the position itself that I question; it's how much of the work, the learning, the best practices that this new position and this office will provide. How much of this will be available to all of us? Remember I talked about the filter? This person will report back to his employer, which will be through the DM to the minister. The minister basically will either be transparent if he or she chooses to be, or may very well choose to not share anything with this House. It will be up to them. Only once information is shared can I then play my role, if I'm still here, of holding people accountable.

I think we both agree transparency is important. I think we could do better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm very pleased to stand up and enter this debate on the Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 160.

We're moving forward with changes to our health and safety system that make workplaces safer to help all Ontario workers come home safe at the end of the day. If these amendments are passed, they would benefit all Ontarians, employers and employees alike.

Employees would have enhanced safety training and a more effective reprisal complaint process. For example, when a worker is fired for reporting unsafe work conditions, there would be a venue for him or her to raise their issues.

The employers would benefit from a more efficient, streamlined prevention system and compliance assistance. The changes would help save lives and prevent injury among Ontarians, and they would help make workplaces safer and more productive. If passed, the amendments would:

—transfer prevention responsibilities from the WSIB to the Ministry of Labour;

—appoint a new chief prevention officer to better coordinate the prevention system;

—create a new prevention council with representatives from labour, employers and safety experts to advise the chief prevention officer and the minister;

—enable the Minister of Labour to set new training standards, revamp the reprisals process and develop codes of practice that help businesses with compliance.

Our approach would be fiscally neutral to the government and would not add employer WSIB premiums.

With the proposed amendments, our government is acting on its commitment to implement the recommendations of the expert panel on occupational health and safety chaired by Tony Dean and composed of representatives of labour, employers and academia. The expert panel consulted extensively across the province, received 400 responses from employer and worker groups, and held 50 meetings across the province. The panel's report was based on the consensus of all members.

Consultations will continue with our stakeholders to implement recommendations such as mandatory awareness training for workers and supervisors, entry-level training for construction workers and training for high-hazard activities. An interim prevention council has already been established to get started on implementation and advice on the recruitment of the CPO. The minister, WSIB and health and safety associations will work together to ensure a smooth transition to the new system.

I'd like to go into some of the details of the proposed legislation. Under the proposed legislation, structural changes would provide for a new prevention organization within the Ministry of Labour. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's prevention mandate would be transferred to the Ministry of Labour. A new chief prevention officer, or CPO, reporting to the Minister of Labour on strategic priorities would provide leadership on the prevention of workplace injury and occupational diseases. The Ministry of Labour would expand its involvement in workplace health and safety.

Like in all fields, whether it's health, energy, being proactive in preventing accidents; things that you do to prevent things from happening in health care, for example, as well—these are all things that are proactive and ultimately designed to make people safe.

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The ministry will also have oversight of the province's health and safety associations, under the leadership of the chief prevention officer. This authority could be delegated only to the CPO.

A new prevention council with representatives from the worker and employer communities and health and safety experts would provide valuable input into the direction of the health and safety system with respect to preventing occupational injury and disease. The minister would have the authority to establish standards for health and safety training in order to enhance this training and ensure workers are properly trained. Workers, especially the most vulnerable workers, would have improved protections against reprisals for exercising their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Now, this new prevention officer: This bill would provide that the Ministry of Labour have oversight of the province's health and safety associations. These powers could be delegated to the chief prevention officer. The chief prevention officer, the CPO, would be responsible for establishing a provincial health and safety strategy. The CPO's strategy would ensure that activities would be

aligned all across the system's partners. The CPO would directly report to and provide an annual report for the Minister of Labour on the statutory mandate and to the Deputy Minister of Labour on administrative public service matters.

A new prevention council, consisting of both employer and worker representatives, would be an important partner in setting the direction for the ministry's prevention activities, and will work closely with the chief prevention officer. The prevention council would also advise the minister on the appointment of the new prevention officer and advise the CPO on the occupational health and safety strategies. Where the CPO contemplates significant changes to the occupational health and safety system, the prevention council chair would be asked to state to the minister whether he or she endorses that direction of change.

Health and safety training in workplaces with six to 19 employees: This bill would provide that all health and safety representatives in workplaces with six to 19 employees would be trained to carry out their health and safety duties. This provision would come into force on a date yet to be determined, to allow for sufficient time to develop the training standards and consult with small businesses and labour on its cost-effective implementation.

My wife works for a company in Ajax, Ontario, and as soon as word of this bill was announced coming forward, she was saying that there was quite a bit of uptake within their company, where new training methods were being brought forward, and also being brought forward was awareness of the issues within her company. So, already on a personal level, I've seen the impact of this bill, and it hasn't even been passed yet.

There's anti-reprisal legislation as well. Proposed amendments would allow the Ontario Labour Relations Board, the OLRB, to deal with workplace safety reprisal claims in a more timely manner. In addition, inspectors would be given the power to refer matters of workplace reprisals to the OLRB in certain circumstances, if the worker agrees.

Regulation-making authority: The proposed amendments include a regulation-making authority to allow the offices of the worker and employer adviser to, in the future, provide support to both workers and employers in reprisal cases. To ensure sufficient implementation time, these provisions would come into effect on a date to be determined.

Either of the co-chairs of a joint health and safety committee would be able to provide a recommendation to the employer on health and safety concerns, as opposed to both employer and labour co-chair needing to agree, as is currently the case.

What is the cost of the changes to the system? The proposed changes would be cost-neutral. The ministry is working with the WSIB to provide a transition plan, including the transfer of funds for prevention services to the Ministry of Labour. Employer programs, which fund the whole occupational health and safety system, should not go up as a result of the Ministry of Labour taking on the WSIB's current prevention functions.

Comments were raised earlier about transparency and accountability. Bill 160 proposes to transfer responsibility for prevention of work-related injuries and illnesses from the WSIB to the ministry. Under the proposed model, what mechanisms would ensure accountability and transparency with respect to Ministry of Labour funding of prevention-related issues and services? Under the proposed model, Ministry of Labour funding of prevention-related initiatives and services, including the funding of the HSAs, would be subject to the same review and approval process as all provincial government expenditures. First, the minister would have to seek approval from the treasury board and cabinet for prevention-related expenditures. Such spending would also be subject to scrutiny through the government's expenditure estimates, in which ministries set out their spending requirements as part of the government's annual formal request to the Legislature for approval of expenditures.

Estimates is an open, public and completely transparent government budgeting process, and the ultimate oversight of this process is through the provincial Legislature. Ministries can be asked to appear before the Standing Committee on Estimates to defend their proposed expenditures.

General accountability and transparency would also be assured through the public accounts of Ontario, which are documents, issued annually, setting out in detail all the ministry's expenditures for the previous year. In addition, proposed requirements in Bill 160 for the minister to publish the chief prevention officer's annual report would support accountability and transparency.

Consultation: Final recommendations were the result of deliberations and consensus among panel members, which was comprised of labour and employer representatives as well as academics. The legislative amendments being proposed as part of Bill 160 are the ministry's legislative response to the report's priority recommendations. The ministry will be working closely with stakeholders on the implementation of many of the recommendations.

For example, the new training requirement for health and safety, as proposed by Bill 160, such as requirements for health and safety representative training, extending regulations to the agricultural sector, mandatory entry-level training and training for high-hazard activities, will be developed in consultation with stakeholders.

Other recommendations, such as the development of more performance-based regulations and accompanying codes of practice, will also require extensive technical assessment and analysis, as well as industry input and consultation.

The testimony of inspectors in reprisal proceedings before the OLRB: This provision, if passed, would preserve the neutrality of Ministry of Labour inspectors by ensuring that they couldn't be called as witnesses by one of the parties to a reprisal proceeding. It would also ensure that the reprisal proceedings would not be delayed

unnecessarily by requests for inspectors to attend at hearings before the OLRB. Inspectors' notes and other documents that may be relevant to a reprisal proceeding could still be provided with the consent of a director.

The expert advisory panel that put this report together, that the legislation is based on, was headed by Tony Dean. The panel received more than 400 responses in over 50 meetings with stakeholders from across the province. The expert panel consisted of the chair and nine safety panel experts from labour groups, employers and academic institutions. The panel included representatives from labour, employers and academia with workplace health and safety experience.

The expert advisory panel looked at a range of issues, including:

—the need for enhanced training, including basic health and safety awareness training;

—the impact of the underground economy on health and safety practices; and

—how existing legislation serves worker safety.

There are a number of things that have come up. This bill has cited safety concerns of people in the prevention of accidents. My son had a job a couple of summers ago working for the city of Kawartha Lakes, and part of the job was patching roads and working with hot asphalt. Every day that he went to work, we would always say to him, "Be careful of what you're doing and don't do anything that you're not trained to do." So we are very aware of the impact of accidents that have happened around this province. I believe that many of the things in this legislation, as it comes forward, will really protect all the workers in this province, including our young people, who so often tragically end up being very severely injured or killed.

The key report recommendations—just to review this. Mandatory basic awareness training and education: requiring mandatory basic health and safety awareness training for all workers and supervisors, free of charge to employers, and improving integration of occupational health and safety training into school and educational programs.

Training for high-hazard work: identify and develop mandatory training requirements for high-hazard work, particularly construction work and work at heights.

Internal responsibility system: requiring mandatory training for workplace health and safety representatives.

Better protection for our vulnerable workers: to make sure that they're protected and to make sure that a lot of the information goes out to them and that they're better informed.

For the new chief prevention officer: We're going to appoint a new chief prevention officer, reporting to the Ministry of Labour, to coordinate and align occupational health and safety requirements—and the fact that he will be accountable in reporting to the Legislature and the minister. There are many different things that are—the ability to dig into it and find out for the accountability.

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I'm pleased that the stakeholders have been involved in this. Obviously, in any piece of legislation, it may not be perfect, but it's a good step forward to ensure that our workers are carefully protected. Thanks, Speaker, for allowing me to take part in this debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to follow the previous speaker, my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. In speaking to Bill 160, I think there's a lot of goodwill being expressed by people around this House, on all sides, on this issue. I sense that in the province of Ontario, between employers and employees as well, on this issue: that there's very few people who are in favour of industrial accidents or are in favour of people being injured on the job. I think that goes without saying. Also, like anything else in our society, you've got some bad actors; you've got companies that abuse the system. From time to time, I'm sure you have persons who abuse the system, like any other system.

What we've done as a government, as a result of some tragedies that didn't need to happen, is we've taken a look at the current way of doing things around the province of Ontario. We're suggesting we move towards a system that is based more on prevention than it is a reactionary system where things kick into place after the injury has taken place. So the emphasis on prevention in this whole initiative is something that's of extreme interest to me and should be, I think, of extreme interest to those who are interested in this topic around the province of Ontario.

It's a well-researched document we have before us. It comes from a well-respected individual. I think that person is respected by all parties in this House for his previous work within these halls and buildings. They went out and did what I thought was a very consultative process. They had 50 meetings and spoke to over 400 people—individuals or delegations—from both sides of the issue, and have put this before us here today for our consideration.

Ontario has got a good system when compared to other jurisdictions. That doesn't mean that it can't get better, and that shouldn't mean that we don't all want it to get better. Certainly, I think the focus on prevention is something that we all should take some heart in, and this bill and the amendments therein are worthy of support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll have an opportunity to speak to this legislation at greater length after my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock finishes off his two minutes, but I did want to enter the debate today. This bill emanates from a tragedy that occurred in this province due to the black market and people trying to find a job—in this case, in construction. Ultimately, they paid the dearest and most powerful price any person could pay, which is losing their life.

We in the Ontario PC caucus, and our colleague Randy Hillier, from I think the longest-named riding here—let me see what his riding name is: Lanark–

Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. He's worked through our caucus, and we've had quite the debate. We support Tony Dean's panel. We believe that more needs to be done to encourage people to work in the legitimate market and not on the black market.

Having said that, in the Ontario PC caucus, we have grave concerns that this piece of legislation doesn't do what Tony Dean's panel had intended—or recommended, for that matter. That's why we have serious concerns today with Bill 160, and that's why we'll continue to speak for other opportunities to increase safety training in Ontario, but also to eliminate that black market and make it more attractive for employees to find work in legitimate opportunities.

So I'd like to thank you, and I look forward to entering the debate for a longer period of time in a few moments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^me^ France Gélinas: I was interested in listening to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I can see that, like all of us in this House, he is interested in moving the laws in Ontario to where workers would have more protection. He spoke about his son, who had taken on a physical job for one summer that had some risk.

I come from a community where most of the jobs are heavy industrial, high-risk jobs. I mean, on April 28 we will be celebrating the Day of Mourning. When we celebrate the Day of Mourning, this is a day to recognize everybody who has died on the job. It was started in Sudbury, by the way, by USW 6500, and it is now something that is recognized worldwide. I bring this forward because not all jobs are created equal. There is lots that can be done to bring forward ways to make even the most dangerous job safer.

My husband is a firefighter. There is a lot of danger in the job that he does, but there are also a lot of best practices that allow him to do his job safely. I look at all of the people who work in mines, and the people I represent in my riding, where a huge percentage of them work in the mine—heavy, industrial, very dangerous jobs. Health and safety have made a lot of those jobs a whole lot safer.

We all want the same thing. To do this, you need transparency; you need accountability; you need a way to hold people accountable. I have spoken before, and although I agree with most of what he said, I disagree with the reporting relationship. The reporting relationship has to be more transparent. Everybody should be able to see the reports that will be done by this new officer, and should be able to learn from the best practices—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: May I first of all compliment everyone in the House on the excellent tone that has been set in this House, where there's actually a good debate going on.

We've heard from the member from Nickel Belt, and now from the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and all of the other comments. They have been very substantial and good comments. To my way of thinking, this is all about only one thing: greater transparency. It comes from a report that was put together by Tony Dean and his people. Tony Dean was not only an assistant Deputy Minister of Labour, but he was also the secretary of cabinet for four years, I think a man who is highly regarded on all sides of the House, an excellent public servant who served his province extremely well. He has put together a very thoughtful report in order to place a greater highlight, as it were, on the safety concerns that we should all be concerned about in the workplace.

I would strongly recommend to this body, to the Legislative Assembly and to members on all sides, that this is a good step forward: (1) to make sure that our employees, the people who work for us on a day-to-day basis, are better protected; and (2) there's much greater accountability by having this office located within the ministry, and the Minister of Labour being ultimately responsible in an accountable fashion and way to any questions that may arise in the House, here, rather than having it being done by an outside, independent agency.

This is a good step forward, and I truly believe that with the implementation of this we will create a safer workplace for all of the people of Ontario who work so hard to make this the great province that it is and will be in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, you have up to two minutes.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I really appreciate the comments made by the members from Kingston and the Islands, Oakville, Nepean–Carleton and Nickel Belt.

As I said when I was speaking earlier, this is about safety for our workers in this province. Ultimately, we all want our workers in this province to come home safe at the end of the day. If they don't come home safe at the end of the day, then it's incumbent upon us in this House and in this province to make sure that the processes are in place so those people do come home and those problems are fixed. This will benefit all of the residents of Ontario, all of the employees in Ontario—the employers or the employees alike.

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The fact that people will be able to come forward now and report on issues that they have when they have a concern and not have to fear reprisal of any sort will help save lives. The full prevention side of this is going to be so important, and the training that will go into our workers to make sure that they understand what they are dealing with when they go in to work at the end of the day.

The member from Nickel Belt spoke about her husband, a firefighter, and many of the people in her area are miners. My father was a firefighter, so I grew up in a house where we understood the risks that they had to go through every day. I have cousins and uncles who are miners in northern Manitoba—or were miners—and it was a constant discussion. They would come home with

some horror stories in the 1960s and 1970s about what they were dealing with and the efforts that they made to improve that.

On the transparency side, as part of the transparency process, I agree that we need to come forward and make sure that those stories are told and brought forward, both when things are good and when things are bad.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure to address this legislation, Bill 160, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, and of course our critic, Randy Hillier. I think it's really important, as we continue on the debate, to put what has happened in context.

On Christmas Day 2009, many of us in Ontario greeted very sad news—along with a very happy day—when we learned that four workers were killed in the city of Toronto and another grievously injured when the scaffolding that was supporting them during their work on Christmas Day collapsed. The workers were illegal immigrants, and the scaffolding had been improperly maintained.

As a result, the government launched a panel on worker safety. That panel was chaired by Tony Dean, a former secretary of cabinet, and the blue-ribbon panel consisted of academics, labour representatives and members of the industry. Almost a year later—and it took almost a year to study this tragedy and others—the panel came back with a series of recommendations in December 2010, just a few short months ago, to mark the near anniversary of that tragedy.

There were obviously political circumstances around that as well. The then Minister of Labour announced that legislation would be forthcoming, effectively on the same day deciding he would become a federal Liberal candidate, and shamelessly, I believe, used this legislation to further a political cause. But I will give credit where it's due to Premier McGuinty for taking swift action on that matter.

Having said that, this bill falls far short of what we in the Ontario PC caucus believe needs to be done, namely to eradicate the black market and make it safer for illegal immigrants or anyone else who is working, to ensure that no one else has to die when they're working.

The report by Tony Dean's blue-ribbon panel focused on the black market in construction. The bill does nothing to prevent employers from entering the black market. Indeed, we have heard that through the HST more people are going underground, whether that is in the home renovation sector or in others across Ontario. This is a real challenge that we are facing in this province, particularly for people who have found themselves without a job, given the job losses we've seen in Ontario and other places across Canada.

The report offered significant steps to increase safety training in Ontario, and the bill does nothing to increase training.

In fact, we are actually concerned in this Legislature on the opposition side, given what we've seen in recent weeks—the attacks on our leader, the leader of the official opposition, by the Working Families Coalition—that this bill is going to create yet another bureaucratic committee that Pat Dillon can sit on. Earlier this week, I asked a question in the Legislature—and Pat Dillon, as many know, sits on the WSIB. He also sits on the college of trades appointments council secretariat and gets handsome per diems. He works with Liberal insiders who have had an opportunity to pool their resources to skirt Ontario election laws to do one thing, and that's to defeat Ontario PC candidates and to attack our leader, Tim Hudak. We believe that this bill would create another bureaucratic entity on which he will be able to have a seat and use his influence and potentially abuse taxpayer dollars.

While the bill contains numerous new obligations and regulations for industry, it has no similar requirements for labour. That is concerning. As with other recent Liberal bills, many of the substantive portions of the legislation are left for the regulations, and in this chamber we have said on numerous occasions that that is a significant problem.

You will recall July 1 of last year when, by regulation, over 900,000 items in Ontario were hit with an eco tax. That fee, or tax, never hit the floor of this Legislature, because it came by way of regulation. The question the Ontario PC caucus then has is, are there going to be new taxes or fees levied as a result of this legislation, that we will find out by way of regulation? It's another question that we have, because this isn't a fulsome bill. In fact, it's another bill that puts forth a few ideas by the government, and that gives the Minister of Labour more oversight and ability to set standards but doesn't specifically prescribe what those are.

The challenge before us, of course, is to say, can we trust this government to do a number of things? One is to eliminate the black market, when we've seen that they've grown it, given the HST. The second is that it not create another bureaucratic institution that their friends can sit on, namely Patrick Dillon. We can't trust that that won't happen. And finally, again, when you see that most of the substantive portions of this legislation are left to regulation, we then have to ask, are we expecting to be hit with another tax, or are we expecting to see what happened with that secret G20 security law, which was done behind the public's back and outside of this Legislature?

With those three key variables, it's very difficult to support what the government is doing, and it's very difficult to applaud them for not going the full road of where Tony Dean's panel came in. Again, I just want to reiterate that the Ontario PC caucus does support the findings of Tony Dean at the time—and I know every member of this Legislature shares in the grief and the sympathies for the families who did lose loved ones. We must remember in this chamber that we are here to protect the people of Ontario, whether they are children, women, new Canadians or workers. That is our job, and that's why it's important to have this debate today.

Having said that, Bill 160, I can safely say, does not safely allay any of our concerns with this current government.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome comments from my colleagues. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I'd like to urge all my colleagues to remember that the purpose of the Dean panel was to eradicate the black market in construction. I think it is important for all of us to remember that, as we continue the debate on this legislation.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^me^ France Gélinas: It was interesting to listen to the take of the member regarding this bill. She certainly did a good historical overview as to how this came to be, following a tragedy, how the panel did its work and then how this legislation came to be.

I tend to agree with her that the problem of black market workers does exist in Ontario, and frankly, it seems to be thriving in every part of Ontario. This made me think a little bit about Monday night, when I had the pleasure to attend the J.S. Woodsworth Awards. The people who won the award were from Justicia for Migrant Workers. I would say it's very similar to the case of what's happening to workers on the black markets, who have very little, if any, health and safety protection. The people who won the J.S. Woodsworth Award spoke very eloquently about what happens to migrant workers, how, here again, as to their health and safety, they are really treated like second-class citizens, and how the health and safety laws of this province are circumvented so they are left with very little protection.

This bill is brought forward so that we improve the health and safety of people in Ontario and we improve the education that will empower workers to protect themselves and to basically be able to use those rights. But all is for nothing if you work on the black market or you're a migrant worker who is not respected.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I just wanted to briefly comment on some of the remarks made by the member from Nepean–Carleton. I think she brought up some really excellent points.

The problem with this bill—it is a challenge because it amends two acts that presently exist: the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. These are two key acts being amended by this bill. When you go through the amendments here, you can you see that there are quite a few amendments in this bill, and if it becomes law, we're going to see major changes in the way the Ontario health and safety act works in regard to certain things.

There are amendments in here regarding training—they're on page 2 of the act. I won't go through all of them, but this provides for training for workers. It's clear in the act what those training systems are.

As far as the issue of whether it would be too bureaucratic or too heavy, a couple of remarks. First of all, this bill proposes a revenue-neutral system, so we're not going to be creating a whole bunch of new positions and charging more money. It's revenue-neutral, and that's very important to know. The chief prevention officer is being created and the panel is being created, but it still remains revenue-neutral because there are changes to the other act, the WSIB act, that offset whatever expenses come on this side.

As far as the black market goes, again, the amendments in this bill to the Ontario health and safety act are quite substantial and there are sections in here that integrate the whole system. With the integration of this system, it will prevent the black market from increasing, because it simplifies the system. I think that's a good thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend the member from our caucus who has spoken and commend her remarks. The member from Nepean–Carleton raises a number of issues that our leader, Tim Hudak, has suggested we give consideration to, and also the idea that has been raised here before that some organization can somehow be added to the existing organizations to ensure safety.

I'm wondering if this new occupational person—there may even be chance that it might be Pat Dillon; he seems to be taking a very active role. As the chief prevention officer, I'm not sure if he wouldn't maybe have a bit of a conflict. I think we need someone that's more broadly skilled to recognize the importance of workplaces and the existing structures of safety committees and advisory committees and the function of unions within those organizations. I think that's very important. Some of them are non-union organizations; some of them are small business.

With all due respect to Tony Dean and the expert panel, I think there needs to be recognition of the good work that's going on today. There are violators now, and I think the accident that has been referred to with the scaffolding around Christmastime—that, I believe, should have been enforced. Where were the existing laws to mandate compliance and inspection of workplaces? There's a right to enter property and inspect and enforce compliance. I think it's a bit of an excuse, actually: By creating more bureaucracy, we're going to solve the problem.

I also respect that our leader, Mr. Hudak, said very clearly that he wants to work with small business to make our places safer and assure that the economy of Ontario and the families of Ontario are safe. Don't ever misunderstand that. We don't want to have more bureaucracy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Nepean does raise some good questions around the underground economy and the illegal use of workers, and the parliamentary assistant assures us that there are measures within the bill that deal with that. I'm not quite sure it does. I worry about that because the enforcement mech-

anisms, in my mind, are not sufficiently strong, and the reprisal provisions are not adequate and/or strong enough to be able to deal with the questions that the member from Nepean raises. But it will be interesting to see tomorrow whether the parliamentary assistant can help us with where exactly in the bill—he can show us—it deals with the issues of the illegal use of immigrants who are underground. I'm looking forward to that.

The other question I raise to the member from Nepean—because the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington raised it as well. I don't know why you guys hate Dillon so much. You shouldn't be showing these emotions so strongly for individuals. He probably thrives on your attention. I suggest that you just stop that, because I'm not sure what you gain from it.

You raise issues, as the member from Lanark, about how this government is going to put in Liberal people in the prevention council, but I worry about a hostile government putting in people who are hostile to workers. That's something that worries me as well. I wonder whether you have any comments about a hostile minister, or potentially a hostile government, that can then fill their own prevention council with members who may not be so good to workers. That's another worry of mine.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Nepean–Carleton, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I do hope I acknowledge all of my colleagues. By my estimation, my colleagues from Scarborough Southwest, Durham and Trinity–Spadina offered their opinions in this debate, and I appreciate that. I particularly appreciate the parliamentary assistant coming to discuss this.

Look, I'm going to be very clear: We do have concerns, in the Ontario PC caucus, with this piece of legislation. It was drafted in response to a crisis, a tragedy that occurred on Christmas Day with four illegal immigrants working in the black market. The blue-ribbon panel that was created, that Tony Dean chaired, focused the report on the black market. This legislation does not do that, with all due respect to the government.

We have valid concerns. We believe that this bill could be better to eradicate the black market. I will stand here and defend that line, because I wholly believe, as my colleagues do as well, that the best way to protect workers is to ensure that they're working in legitimate employment that does adhere to standards. It's one thing to put standards on legitimate employers, which is important; however, if you're not doing anything to eradicate how this occurred in the first place, which is the black market, we have a real challenge in Ontario.

Again, I'll go back to one of the key issues that has driven people into the underground economy in Ontario recently: It's the HST. We've heard that from the home renovation sector as well as others, and I would ask the government, in the coming days and weeks before we leave this place for an election, to address that challenge and to address the challenge that we all see as a result of this underground black market economy.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 8, this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's a pleasure to introduce, in the gallery, Gene Lewis, executive director of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a couple of things. First of all, in the public galleries, I'd like to welcome many representatives of the Ontario Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association and also reps of Camping in Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, I'd just like to acknowledge a member of the press gallery. Robert Benzie of the Toronto Star is 45 today.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I too want to join in wishing Rob Benzie a happy birthday—he's not here yet, but he will be—and Antonella Artuso from the Sun, whose birthday was on Sunday.

And I think of interest to all members of the House: he's not here yet, but my colleague and good friend Monte Kwinter turned 80 yesterday. Here he is.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize Al Robinson, who's from the Ontario Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association. Welcome, Al, and keep up the good work.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm delighted to introduce two great residents from the riding of Peterborough who are in the members' east gallery: Marie Calberry and Claire Cartman, who recently won a silent auction to have lunch with the MPP. I know they're looking forward to the proceedings of question period this morning and to a fine lunch a little later this morning.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have some distinguished guests from one of the most beautiful cities in the world, Perugia, Italy. I would like to welcome Giorgio Faraglia and Christina Vescovi, and their hosts John Orsini and Rosa Orsini. Benvenuti a Toronto, Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of page Rafeh Shahzad and the member from Brampton West to welcome Kausar Shahzad and Shahzad Hussain to the public gallery today. It's a pleasure to have you here.

Also today we'd like to welcome a group of broadcast journalism students from Sheridan College who are seated in the press gallery. Sheridan is located in Oakville. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, Ontario families are very concerned about the

bloat and waste that is growing under the McGuinty government; that families are paying more and getting less in return. One of the areas where you've seen extraordinary bloat and waste is the growth in the size and cost of agencies, boards and commissions under your leadership. We have given you several examples where we believe, for example, the LHINs and the Ontario Power Authority together have taken half a billion dollars in waste and administration.

Premier, if you're really committed to finding any kind of savings, will you follow the Ontario PC call to shut the doors on your wasteful bureaucracies like the LHINs and the OPA?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to, to a certain extent, welcome my honourable colleague to the party. Over a week ago, we announced that we were closing 14 Ontario agencies. Before that, we had announced we were going to merge Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario Realty Corp., for an annual savings of $5 million.

My concern any time a member of the party opposite stands up and says they're looking to cut things in order to save money is their record. In the past, when they looked to save money, they cut back on hospitals, they cut back on water inspectors, they cut back on meat inspectors and they cut back on nurses. Those are the kinds of concerns that we have and that we share with Ontarians when it comes to their language when it comes to cuts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier claims that he has plans to close down 14 agencies. Premier, you added 14 regional health bureaucracies called the LHINs across this province, folks who don't spend a single minute with patients. They don't do any surgeries, they don't even plug in an MRI, and they've taken $250 million out of front-line care. Our position is clear: We would shut the doors on the LHINs and put every penny into front-line health care for Ontario families instead.

Premier, you boast about a merger between the Ontario Realty Corp. and Infrastructure Ontario. Your so-called savings amount to 0.0002% of your record $18.7-billion debt. Are you so out of touch that you think that's an achievement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's hard to believe it, but my friend opposite is actually in favour of big government. He wants to take those decisions and the money that is now being distributed by LHINs throughout Ontario communities, and he wants to consolidate that in downtown Toronto. He wants to create big government.

I'm with Dr. Wilbert Keon—by the way, Senator Wilbert Keon—who said the following in response to this gentleman's proposal: "I have no idea what his plan is and a general statement like that doesn't make sense to me at all....

"I'm a card-carrying Conservative, but my love for health care transcends my political persuasions."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think that shows how dramatically out of touch this Premier has become with the concerns of average, hard-working families. At a time they're waiting far too long for emergency care, you embrace your wasteful bureaucracies, the LHINs, which should be closed down and the money put into front-line care.

Behind you, your Ontario energy minister has an unseemly love affair with the Ontario Power Authority, which stands as a tribute to McGuinty government waste, driving up the hydro bills. We would take a different course.

Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you listen to the PC Party recommendations, close the doors on the LHINs, shut down the OPA and pass on those savings to Ontario families instead?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say I'm with Senator Keon when it comes to our position on LHINs.

I want to remind my honourable colleague that the LHINs are responsible for the distribution of some $22 billion. They are funding our hospitals, our long-term-care institutions and community care.

Beyond that, I think one of the things that Ontarians remain very interested in is, why is it that my honourable colleague opposite is not championing his commitment—his firm, solemn and unwavering commitment—to take $3 billion out of health care? That's going to result in a loss of nurses, in a loss of doctors, in an increase in wait times and in a shortage of long-term-care beds. I encourage my honourable colleague to stop talking about his cuts to LHINs and to start talking about his cuts in health care generally—we're talking to the tune of $3 billion.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, you have an extraordinary record of waste and mismanagement under your leadership. You continue to embrace your wasteful LHINs. You have a bizarre attachment to the Ontario Power Authority, which is driving up hydro bills. You have an unseemly embrace of your eco-tax-collecting agencies, which are pulling more money out of the pockets of Ontario families and delivering less in return. We would take a different approach.

Today, Premier, I am tabling a private member's bill to review every agency, board and commission in this province, a sunset review to make them justify their existence. If they can't, they would be shut down and the savings invested in front-line services and balancing the books.

Premier, will you please support this comprehensive, thorough approach to rooting out this kind of waste in the McGuinty government?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague, "Welcome to the club." Over a week ago, we announced the closure of 14 separate agencies—not a review; a specific commitment to shut down 14 separate agencies. Some time before that, we announced the merger of a couple of agencies that will save us some $5 million on an annual basis.

Again, my concern is what it is the honourable member is not talking about. Why won't he talk about his plan to take $3 billion out of health care? Why does he not talk more and expand a bit more on his plan to shut down full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario? That's something we are very much wed to, absolutely committed to. We will see this through. Why is it they're not talking about those kinds of cuts? Those are the kinds of things that Ontario families have a passionate concern about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier just doesn't get it. He's patting himself on the back for what is equivalent to a 0.0002% in savings. He brags that he's closing down 14 agencies. Premier, you added 14 regional health bureaucracies in LHINs alone. Your Ontario Power Authority is driving up hydro bills with extraordinary waste and incompetence.

Here's what a PC government would do: put the onus on the agencies to prove their ongoing value to Ontario families who actually pay the bills. If it works, you keep it. If it's broken and needs to be fixed, you fix it. But if it can't justify its existence, it goes.

Premier, why won't you support this very reasonable measure to root out the waste under the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's take the opportunity to continue to flesh out for Ontarians some of the Ontario Conservative Party plan at this point in time. They're going to take $3 billion out of health care. We know that they're going to eliminate full-day kindergarten in Ontario. We know that they don't support clean energy, so they're going to rip up the contracts which have resulted in thousands of jobs in so many Ontario communities when it comes to building, erecting and maintaining solar panels, wind turbines and the like. We know that they intend to fire up our coal plants, which we made a commitment to eliminate here in the province of Ontario. We know that they are going to scrap the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

In ensuing questions, I'll take a bit more opportunity to flesh out their position since they're somewhat reluctant to talk about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you just don't get what's happening in homes across this province, conversations in coffee shops and on street corners. Families are sick and tired of paying more and more to the McGuinty government and getting less in return. Look at the long list of McGuinty waste: a billion dollars down the drain in the eHealth boondoggle; scandal after scandal after scandal at the lottery and gaming corporation; and an MPAC bureaucracy that is giving away iPods to its employees and getting basic assessments wrong, driving up taxes across this province. Premier, are you that dramatically out of touch that you don't know what is going on under your nose each and every day in the Ontario government?

Will you do the right thing and adopt our bill for a sunset review for all agencies, boards and commissions and, if they don't justify their existence, close them down?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I've already welcomed my honourable colleague to the club when it comes to eliminating unnecessary agencies, boards and commissions. We're doing it in a thoughtful and responsible way.

My honourable colleague, for example, is proposing that we sunset Cancer Care Ontario. That is something that we, on this side of the House, cannot support.

Again, I think what Ontarians continue to wait for is, at some point in time, that my honourable colleague and his party are going to move beyond the comfort and the quiet preserve of criticism, and that they're actually going to put forward a substantive plan for Ontarians to consider. In the meantime, I'll help Ontarians understand what it is, in fact, they're proposing.

They want to take $3 billion out of health care. They want to shut down full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. They want to rip up our contracts for clean energy which will result in thousands of jobs. That's just a glimmer, just a bit of a glimpse of what it is they in fact propose for Ontario families.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, Ontario's finance minister criticized the federal budget for not doing enough for jobs, but the Prime Minister's so-called jobs strategy of making life less affordable with an unfair HST while handing out billions of dollars in corporate tax giveaways that aren't creating any jobs seems a lot like the Premier's plan. Can the Premier explain the difference to us?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We will have the opportunity to table a budget next Tuesday which will address a range of opportunities for new jobs for Ontarians; which will build on our support of a strong public education system; which will provide training opportunities to more Ontarians and a brighter future for Ontarians. There's a proper way to get back to balance while you create jobs and protect the vital public services that are so important to all Ontario families. I look forward to the leader's support of those initiatives next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Jim Flaherty has praised Ontario for following his lead. One pundit noted that previous budgets from this government look like they were faxed from Ottawa. Now, the opposition in Ottawa has made it clear that it is not the time for another round of corporate tax giveaways. Does the Premier agree with the Prime Minister's decision to cut corporate taxes or the position of his own party?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I don't think the leader of the third party heard Mr. Flaherty's comments this morning on CBC.

I'll say this: According to Jack Mintz, our tax plan for jobs and growth will create 600,000 net new jobs in Ontario over the next 10 years.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Hugh Mackenzie knows too.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague reminds me that Hugh Mackenzie and the Centre for Policy Alternatives have endorsed that tax plan as being the right plan for people of modest incomes because we're cutting taxes and making life more affordable for Ontario's most vulnerable citizens.

Finally, this government will protect the great strides we've made in public education and public health care. Those are the issues that families are concerned about. That's what our budget will address as it creates jobs and lowers the deficit more and more each year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: One opposition MP says: "Now is not the time for a $6-billion tax cut to our largest corporations that comes at the expense of families." That quote comes from the MP for Ottawa South, David McGuinty. Can the Premier tell us whether he agrees with Mr. McGuinty?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, the leader of the New Democratic Party proposes a job creation plan for Alberta; she proposes a job creation plan for Saskatchewan and British Columbia; she proposes a job creation plan for Indiana and for Illinois and for Ohio and Michigan. All she cares about is pushing jobs, like steelworker jobs, out of Hamilton; like auto jobs, out of Windsor and St. Catharines.

I have the greatest respect for the member for Ottawa South. I look forward to campaigning for him and his colleagues should there be a federal election. But make no mistake: This government will protect the vital gains we've made in public health care and public education as we eliminate the deficit and create a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question is to the Premier as well. Families were looking for the Harper Conservatives to put their priorities first. Instead, they cut taxes for corporations that are shedding jobs. They didn't get it. Next week, families will be looking to the McGuinty Liberals. Will the McGuinty Liberals put family budgets first, or will they follow the Harper Conservatives' lead by putting corporate budgets first?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I'm pleased to take the question from my honourable colleague, although I thought that reference to the MP for Ottawa South was a low blow. I was hoping that you were going to call her on that, Speaker.

I can say that our government has worked long and hard to ensure that we are sensitive to the issues that concern families right in their homes.

That's why we've worked so hard to enhance the quality of education we deliver to all our children. We've got higher test scores, higher graduation rates and smaller classes. We've made spaces for 200,000 more young people in our post-secondary institutions.

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We've also invested heavily in health care. We've got our wait times down. There are thousands more nurses and doctors. We've got family health teams.

We have never lost sight of those fundamental concerns of families, especially when it comes to those public services they rely on: their schools and their health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The families that I've been meeting with across Ontario tell me that they're stretched to the limit. Many have been forced to take on new jobs that pay a lot less. Many haven't seen their wages go up in years. All have seen the cost of living skyrocketing. There's no wonder that people like Eve Corves say, "We just cannot seem to get a break."

Will the Premier give people like Ms. Corves a break in next week's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll remind my honourable colleague about some of the things that we've done, and I think she can draw some optimism from our record.

We've increased the minimum wage seven times; she may not recall, but it had been frozen for many, many years. We increased it seven times. We increased social assistance seven times. We created the Ontario child benefit. It started at $600 per child. It's now up to $1,100 per child. It's benefiting 1.3 million children who are growing up in struggling families—600,000 families, in fact.

The average Ontario family this year is receiving a $355 income tax cut. They'll continue to get that every year going forward. The Minister of Finance, through our policy, has also taken thousands of our lowest-income earners off the tax rolls entirely.

Again, I would argue to my honourable colleague opposite that we are, in fact, keeping the needs of our families front and centre at all times.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm talking about the fact that families are feeling the financial squeeze these days. I'm talking about families like Dana Moore's. Dana writes, "My oil bill at this time last year was averaging around $500 a month. I just received my monthly oil bill, and it was $743."

This government has a choice. They can side with families like Dana's and put family budgets first, or they can side with Prime Minister Harper and offer billions of dollars in tax giveaways to banks and insurance companies that actually shed 25,000 jobs this past year.

Whose side is the Premier on? Who's he going to side with?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I wish the world were as simple as my honourable colleague describes it to be: "You've got to decide whether you're on the side of our businesses, which generate our jobs, or on the side of our

families and their public services." The fact of the matter is, we think that we've got to be on both sides. We think we've got to bring a balanced approach. That's why, at the same time as we are reducing the tax burden on our businesses, we've also reduced the tax burden on our families. At the same time, we continue to find ways to invest in those services that families have got to be able to count on, like their schools, like their health care, like their environmental protection. Those are the kinds of things that we have never once lost sight of as a government.

While we are, in fact, reducing—again, to repeat—the tax burden on our businesses in order to ensure that they can compete in a very competitive global economy, we are also finding ways to provide financial supports to those families and enhance the quality of their public services.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Minister, two weeks ago you announced that the agency review you began in December was complete, after 13 agencies were trimmed and a little over $5 million was recovered. It was as if you unfurled a banner that read "Mission Accomplished," when you said, "We've gone beyond the goal we set."

How will you spend the $5 million your review netted? Will you put all of it against the $18.7-billion deficit, or will you pump it back into the agencies that survived your review, or return it all to the pockets of Ontario families who struggle to pay for agencies they no longer need?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's interesting to learn today that the Conservatives are actually considering sunsetting Cancer Care Ontario.

What the member opposite and the leader of his party don't recognize is that 15 of the largest agencies spend 90% of the money that's spent by all agencies. So yes, indeed, we did take some initial steps, and I can assure you that, as we move forward, we will do more. We have a plan to balance the budget, a plan that's clear and laid out. We have yet to see a plan from that party, and we know why: because they're going to take $3 billion out of health care. They are going to shut down full-day learning. They want to rip up every contract with farmers who are producing clean, renewable energy.

That's their plan; our plan's very different. We're going to protect education and health care as we build a better future for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, your spending is what is putting education and health care at risk.

Premier McGuinty has a spending problem that won't be solved by merging two bloated agencies like Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario Realty Corp. into one mega-bloated agency. You haven't taken effective action, so the Ontario PC leader is bringing forward sunset review legislation that looks seriously at agencies and what they're spending. If this legislation had been in place, scandals at eHealth and at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. could have been avoided or caught early.

Minister, why won't you commit to adopting our measures that will root out waste in the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Their idea of waste is hospital beds in emergency rooms. Their idea of waste is nurses. I'll remind you that that government compared our nurses to hula-hoop workers. Their idea of waste is full-day learning. They are going to get rid of that.

They have no plan, no idea. We won't support that bill. Why? Because what they did when they were in office was, they deliberately exempted Hydro One and OPG even from freedom of information—which we did, and what did we find when we opened the doors and we opened the window to accountability? We found a yacht owned by Hydro One; we found an Air Canada Centre box; we found 18 months of missing expense records for the chair of that; we found untendered contracts with senior Tories.

We changed that. We're building better education and health care, protecting them from people like that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. As the minister knows, hearings are under way on a proposed new nuclear plant at Darlington. Presenters are supposed to answer questions from other interveners, but in January, Ministry of Energy ADM Rick Jennings negotiated a special agreement with the panel, allowing Ontario government presenters to refuse to answer questions.

Why is the government undermining the panel process on the proposed Darlington plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That question is absolutely ridiculous. I suggest that the member read that letter carefully, because the letter says no such thing.

Rick Jennings will be there as the assistant deputy minister of the Ministry of Energy. He'll be there to respond to any questions that need to be responded to. This is an important issue, and it's very important that he is there. He'll be following the process that is put in place right now by the federal panel out in Courtice.

We look forward to following that process. It's an important process. It's important that Ontarians have their say. It's important that we hear what Ontarians in other groups across the province, whether they agree with the project or not, have to say. We're very confident that it will be a thorough process. My federal colleagues have assured me of that. They've responded positively to our request to ensure that it is indeed a very thorough process.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I know that you enforce the rules on unparliamentary language, so I will limit my comments in response to that non-answer.

Yesterday, that minister told the media, "We're open to responding to any questions that may come up. It's just a case of working with the process that they have in place." But the truth is, the Ministry of Energy has sought to change the panel process and secure a special right to refuse to answer questions.

Why does the minister tell reporters that he will answer questions when he won't?

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Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the member is simply wrong. It's simply not the case. We're pleased to answer whatever questions come up in the hearings. Indeed, Mr. Jennings will be there, and he'll be there to respond to questions in keeping with the process that is in place under the federal environmental assessment process, the highest level of environmental process in the land. It's very important that the ADM is there to respond to those questions. He'll be there.

What the NDP should also take note of on this issue is their reference early last week. The media covered this very well when they suggested that your efforts to exploit what's going on in Japan right now in terms of trying to further your own political interest is simply distasteful.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. I would just remind the members that question period is a very important time in the parliamentary system and in a parliamentary day, but when we start to bring it to a level of some personal attacks on one another—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful from somebody who's not sitting in his seat, to the honourable member.

I'd just ask—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister, that's not helpful either.

As I'm standing, I would like to deliver a message to all of you that I think is of importance to every member in this chamber, and that is, let's be cognizant of some of the language that we use, and let's not bring it down to a level, as an honourable member who's not in his seat described it as being, in the "gutter."

New question.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. There is a consensus that reducing red tape in Ontario is of key importance for businesses so that they can rightly focus their time and money on being competitive, creating jobs and contributing to our prosperity, something that I often hear from businesses in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

As all members are aware, the government introduced legislation to help Ontario businesses save time and money and, since then, I have been hearing positive feedback about the Open for Business initiative from our business community. Yet, the opposition who continually rage against red tape failed to follow through on their own words. They voted against the very act created to save businesses' time and money by cutting red tape.

Would the Minister of Economic Development and Trade update this House about our Open for Business initiative and provide some tangible evidence to all members on the progress we have been making in reducing the regulatory and administrative burden in our economy?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to give a report, and we've got so much more information that couldn't possibly fit in the time frame.

But our Open for Business initiative has hit another major milestone. In fact, we're launching, this Monday, yet another round table with another sector, this one the restaurant, hotelier and service sector, where we'll be working with them directly to sort out their priorities in what they see as a regulatory burden. So far, we have moved across 500 different business services available across 17 different ministries. We have hit some 70,000 regulations that have since been eliminated across all our ministries.

We have more work to do. What business has told us is, it's not just about the number of regulations, but it's the type of regulation, that it's working with businesses directly in how we actually work with them, and changing those processes means more to them than just—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: With these types of results, I'm puzzled that the official opposition still voted against this bill.

As you know, Ottawa is a technology hub, and we are very proud of the innovative and important work the sector does and the immense contribution it makes to our regional economy. I understand that the medical technology sector, which forms a key part of the Ottawa technology cluster, is one of the industries that the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has targeted as part of its business sector strategy under the Open for Business initiative.

Could the Minister of Economic Development and Trade provide more examples of how this government's Open for Business initiative is enhancing the ability of key sectors like this one to grow and prosper, to the benefit of my community and communities across the province?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: We do have a number of examples. For example, we have one telephone number now for business, for municipal, provincial and federal services that are available to business—all through one line.

This particular member for Ottawa Centre, who follows the medical technology community specifically, knows that in this example this sector is thrilled with the work of Open for Business.

By way of example, Ontario is now the leading jurisdiction in establishing a method of assessing technologies that will shift the evaluation of medical devices upstream

so the results of the assessments are determined pre-market. This doesn't happen anywhere. Now these companies are saying, "We wish that every province would do what Ontario is doing," a direct result of the Open for Business initiative.

We're delighted that the member from Ottawa Centre is a huge proponent of this work, a huge proponent of the industry that makes up such a big part of the Ottawa business community.

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. The McGuinty government has asked the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for an opinion on how to give relief to parents who were denied support because they hadn't witnessed the murder of their child. In other words, you're asking the board to reconsider the opinions the Ombudsman gave you in 2006 and that the Honourable Roy McMurtry gave you in 2008.

Yesterday, the Acting Premier was asked for a timeline for action. Ignoring the question, he talked about increases to the victims' funds that parents of murdered children are not allowed to access.

I'll ask you, Premier: What is the timeline for when your broken victims-of-crime system will be fixed for parents of murdered children?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I was up in Timmins with NAN yesterday, so I could have probably better answered the question, and I will give the same answer that we've given, which is that we've said we're going to fix this. We've said we are going to fix it as quickly as possible. We've asked the CICB for some advice on different rules of procedure and possible legislative changes and we're taking a look at some other options as well to fix it as quickly as possible. I think the member, when he asked the question, forgot to mention that we are investing more than any previous government in history in victim services in the various forms—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That's the exact same answer that the Acting Premier gave yesterday. Your answer was no better than his and you didn't like his.

It's no mystery what's broken and how to fix the program. The Ontario PC leader has put forward a plan of action that will give parents relief. In contrast, Premier McGuinty dithers and puts forward more process and excuses, which we've just heard. You won't take action; the Ontario PC caucus has.

Tomorrow, the justice policy committee will debate an Ontario PC motion to investigate the $31-million surplus in the victims' justice fund and why you're not adopting our three-point plan to release funds to victims.

Will the McGuinty government support our motion and expedite relief to the parents of murdered children? Will you do that tomorrow?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Both the Premier and I have said we are going to expedite the resolution to this.

I'm very pleased to hear that the committee is going to take a look at this because when the Tories left office they had a $77-million surplus in the victims' justice fund. The amount that they referred to that we had was $31 million. But of the $31 million, there's a contingency, and $3 million that's unallocated. All the rest is allocated to programs that are under way and it's already all committed for victims.

We're going to sort this out very quickly, within a matter of days or weeks. The member should know that. But I'm quite happy if we get into a comparison between their record and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Newspapers are reporting that US Steel is ravaging the Hamilton economy yet again. It's planning to move millions of dollars worth of metallurgical coal from the former Stelco plant. This, at a time when their CEO John Surma's salary rose to $8.3 million. Does the Premier really support this coal being processed outside of Hamilton?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

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Hon. Sandra Pupatello: First of all, we want to say that we actively work with Hamilton on a regular basis. We recognize the challenge that Hamilton and region has been under because of the pressure of having so many US Steel workers who have not been working. It's been very detrimental to the community, and we do everything we can to be supportive. Let me say that first.

Second, there is a lot of information that we are not aware of, in terms of resources moving in and moving out, whether they're moving to the Nanticoke plant or from that site or across—we don't know. We don't want to respond to questions where we simply don't know what the facts are about what the company is doing on-site. What is important is that on the last visit that I made to Hamilton, I met with people. I met with people representing the steelworkers. I have historically met with people representing the company as well. We constantly stay in touch to see if there is any role that the provincial government can play in resolving a dispute—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Local 1005 agreed to the production of coke at the Hamilton plant to preserve the coke-making battery. If the ovens are turned off, it could be devastating to the whole operation. This coke is being produced by non-unionized salaried workers. The company's actions to move the coal out of Hamilton is another slap in the face of the co-operative union workers and those who've been locked out since November 7.

The federal government, together with the Ontario government, could pass legislation to restart Hamilton Works under a stand-pat collective agreement. Why won't this government get tough on job-destroying foreign companies like US Steel and force them to restart the Hamilton Works?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think the member opposite knows that there are a number of items under federal jurisdiction that the federal government—actually, to their credit—have made significant moves on, and US Steel is dealing with that in court. Let me say that just last week, the local members, the local MPPs, did meet—both the member from Hamilton Mountain and from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale—with the US Steel workers.

Again, we are in a position to do everything we can to see that those workers go back to work, and we are constantly offering that support to them, whether that's mediation—what other kind of intervention can we provide? What's important for Hamilton is that the balance of the work of this government is to put more investment in Hamilton—groups like Max Aicher, a new steel company, taking a US Steel mill and reopening it and hiring hundreds of steelworkers. That is the work that we're doing to support a great city like Hamilton, and we will continue to do more.

FOREIGN-TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Attorney General. As the world emerges from extremely challenging economic times, we must re-examine how we do things and explore new and innovative ideas to help us emerge stronger and more prosperous. My constituents are heartened to hear that the McGuinty government has a plan to not only weather these difficult times but to put Ontario on a stronger economic footing to benefit generations of Ontarians. Through the Open for Business plan, our government demonstrates its support for innovation and our commitment to deliver economic opportunities and growth to the people of the province.

As a professional engineer, I know that the Attorney General's office is responsible for the Professional Engineers Act. Can the Attorney General please tell me what the government has done to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and barriers to practice that foreign-trained engineers face to help revitalize Ontario's economy?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Ottawa–Orléans, not only in his capacity as MPP but also with his background as a professional engineer, brings such good insight to this. We've worked very closely with my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade through the Ontario Open for Business initiative to make for an open Ontario.

One of the things that was identified by my colleague is that foreign-trained engineers had to have either permanent residency or citizenship before they could start working here. This denied them the opportunity to work, and businesses were denied the opportunity of their expertise. Working with Kim Allen, the registrar of the engineers society, we have eliminated that barrier, making for stronger businesses, better access to talent and better access for our newcomers who come with the training to work right here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Each year Ontario opens its doors to thousands of newcomers. These newcomers choose Ontario as their new home to create a better life for themselves and their families. Newcomers bring with them their skills, talents and expertise, which they hope can help them find a good job, but while many newcomers possess the skills they need and the will and desire to succeed, many of them find it difficult to enter the workforce.

Newcomers in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans have told me that the lack of Canadian work experience is often a barrier to finding meaningful employment in their profession. Can the minister tell newcomers in my riding and throughout Ontario what the government is doing to help internationally trained engineers to find work in their profession?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm proud to say that the McGuinty government has invested in more than 200 bridge training programs to help our newcomers succeed. Bridge training, as we all know, creates a bridge to employment by helping our newcomers get training and also get Canadian workplace experience so that they can get licensed or certified in their profession or trade.

Our government, for example, has worked with the Professional Engineers of Ontario to develop bridge training programs specifically tailored for our internationally trained engineers. We currently have nine active programs that are helping to put the skills of our newcomer engineers to work. I'm pleased to tell the Legislature that approximately one third of Ontario's 73,000 licensed engineers were actually educated outside of Canada.

These programs work. They help our newcomers get good jobs to support themselves and their families. The McGuinty government will continue to invest in these bridge training programs.

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Education: Trustees elected to the York Region District School Board have been told that it's inappropriate for them to meet in private with parents who want to discuss issues related to school board policy. Parents and trustees elected to represent them want to know whether this directive has come from the minister and, if so, how can the minister so blatantly undermine the role of an elected trustee?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Certainly, I very much appreciate the role of locally elected trustees, having been one myself. I am also aware that the Education Act

is very clear around those five conditions that enable boards to hold private sessions where the public is not able to participate. They are very specific. They are outlined in the Education Act. They were in the Education Act when you were in government. They remain there now.

We are absolutely committed as a government to ensure that school boards act within those legislated guidelines. If there are people in any community in Ontario who have a question about whether or not boards are conducting business appropriately in public, they should contact this office and we will definitely look into that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: These are parents from York region who simply want to meet with their trustee to talk about public school board issues. The director of education has in fact told trustees that they are not allowed to meet with parents in private to discuss these issues. They're being told that a staff member must attend every meeting that trustees have with parents.

I would like to know: Since when is it inappropriate for duly elected trustees not to be allowed by the director of education to meet with parents in private? Will the minister stand in her place and tell us whether she believes it is appropriate and, if so, will she send a directive to this director and every other director who would undermine the role of trustees in this province?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I very much appreciate the question. It is an important one. Certainly, trustees are accountable to the people who elected them. They are not accountable to the school board administration when it comes to dealing with the people who elected them.

I would say that trustees do have a responsibility to the people who elected them; that there is nothing in the Education Act that would say that a trustee should not meet with their constituents. That is very clear. Nothing has changed with this government. In fact, we believe that locally elected boards are accountable to their communities, and the best way to do that is to meet with the people who elected them.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Clayton Leveille was a healthy 21-year-old from St. Catharines on vacation with his girlfriend in Mexico last July. Like many Ontarians going on vacation, he had purchased health insurance in case something went wrong, but when it did and Clayton fell gravely ill, he was left stranded in Mexico because no hospital beds were available for him at home. It took seven weeks for a transfer back to Ontario. Sadly, after months of treatment, Clayton tragically passed away.

Now his family is left wondering whether a speedier transfer could in fact have helped him save his life. How could the Premier allow families to be left asking these kinds of questions?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Obviously, first and foremost, I know that all members join me in expressing my sympathy to his family at this time of their personal loss.

The best that I can say is that we work as hard as we can, through all of our health care providers, to ensure that if there is someone who finds themself in need outside the country, we move as quickly as we possibly can to have that person returned to an Ontario health setting like a hospital. I know that great efforts were made in this particular case.

I think I should also take the opportunity to remind Ontarians that when they're travelling out of the country, we encourage them to obtain private travel insurance. OHIP only covers a limited number of services while travelling outside of the country.

We also find that we've got to work with the insurance companies in these cases as well to ensure that the person is brought back.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sadly, the Leveille family is not the only one that's having this kind of an experience. In February, the Toronto Star reported on a Woodbridge man stuck in St. Louis for 10 weeks, unable to secure a Toronto hospital bed. Our offices receive calls all too frequently from families facing this unacceptable situation. Ontarians want a reliable health care system that will take care of them if they fall sick, but today it seems that this government is abandoning those very patients.

What is the Premier going to do to assure families that they will never have to face this kind of heart-wrenching situation again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the minister is making sure that we can draw whatever lessons that we possibly can from these particular circumstances and move as quickly as we can to bring people back who are in need of health care here.

I can tell you, and I know my honourable colleague would want to agree with us in this regard, that while there is always more work to be done when it comes to health care, we have made real and measurable progress. We have thousands more nurses, we have thousands more doctors, we have the shortest wait times in the country now, and we have the first nurse-practitioner-led clinics in North America—as I say, real, measurable progress. And 94% of Ontarians now have their own family doctor. We've come a long way from where we were in years past, but again, as I say, we're always prepared to acknowledge that there is still more work to be done.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. In recent discussions on the legislation you have introduced for forest tenure modernization, the members opposite have made frequent mention of a flawed concern that increasing the role of markets to allocate and sell wood in Ontario is somehow a bad thing and that US companies will be taking profits away from Ontario. It's my understanding that this tenure modernization initiative, which was asked for across the north, I might add, will actually

help put Ontario's wood back to work and continue to build a new forest economy for all of Ontario.

Would the minister please tell this House how this initiative is going to improve the forestry sector in northern Ontario and improve Ontario's economy?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for the question. Certainly, at the core of our forest modernization legislation is a focus on bringing our forests and our people back to work. That's one of the main reasons why our legislation is retaining section 30 of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, an important section which makes it clear that companies need to process and use Ontario's wood within our jurisdictions, therefore protecting and stimulating the creation of more forestry jobs in Ontario.

May I say that this decision was certainly supported throughout our extensive consultations with Ontarians on the forestry sector priorities that are a very important part of this legislation? It was clear that people wanted change and improvements to the forestry sector, and to their credit, the people of Ontario also said they want change that is measured and cautious, while at the same time promoting job growth.

That's what this legislation does for the forestry sector: It moves forward on revitalizing the sector but holds onto those important parts of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act that work and protect jobs in Ontario, such as section 30.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I thank the minister for the answer, and it brings us, actually, to another important point. With almost no wood leaving Ontario, it seems clear that the members opposite may find it helpful to brush up on some of their facts, particularly when there are businesses in Ontario that also depend on wood that comes from out of the province. Would they change the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, which many of them voted for, so that wood neither enters nor leaves Ontario, and therefore deny regular supplies of wood from out of province to mills such as Abitibi in Fort Frances, Domtar in Dryden or St. Marys Paper in Sault Ste. Marie?

Could the minister please inform us how the governsment values and stimulates jobs in Ontario's forestry sector and how it protects forestry jobs from the ruin implicated by suggestions such as those by the members opposite?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's a very good point. It was legislation brought forward by the New Democrats many years ago.

I think it's important to point out that our legislation calls for new local forest management corporation pilots that will test the principles of our proposed model and, perhaps most importantly, will be led by directors who have local, regional and aboriginal growth and prosperity as their top priorities. What we're really trying to do is to set up these LFMCs, as they're called, to be led by those who will promote regional wood harvesting and processing so that Ontario's wood can better benefit the families and the workers of our Ontario-wide forestry-dependent communities.

Ontario's crown forests belong to the people of Ontario, and we want to make sure that Ontario receives the full benefit of this precious resource.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the government of Alberta has recently changed its journeyperson apprenticeship ratio of one journeyperson to two apprentices in the electrical trade. But here in Ontario, the minister and his College of Trades insist on maintaining Ontario's antiquated and restrictive ratio of three journeypersons to one apprentice for the electrical trade, in spite of their promise in 2008 to improve access to trades for Ontarians. As a result, many young Ontarians across this province are unable to pursue challenging, rewarding careers in the electrical trade.

Ontario's young skilled tradespeople are leaving our province to find training. Will the Premier immediately amend Ontario's electrical apprenticeship ratio to one to one?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I wish that there was as much enthusiasm over there for the presentation of a plan of any kind at some point in time.

Let me tell you a little bit about the plan that we've had in place for apprenticeships in Ontario for some time now. First of all, I'm very proud to report that there are 120,000 apprentices being trained. That's double what we had in 2003. We've also, for a number of good reasons, put in place our very first college for apprenticeships. Among other things, what we want to do is convey to our young people, particularly those moving towards the end of their high school careers, the real, viable and attractive options to be found in apprenticeships and in skilled trades in the province of Ontario.

We're moving ahead with our plan for apprenticeships in Ontario. We're making some progress, but there's always more to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I thought that the Premier was looking over his shoulder. I didn't know if it was the minister or Pat Dillon he was looking for, but anyway.

Young Ontarians cannot wait for your minister to make the decision to allow apprentices to access qualified journeypersons. There is no valid reason for these restrictive ratios. Again, Ontario is the only province in Canada with a three to one ratio. All other provinces have lower ratios.

I have received countless letters from students in the electrical trade who cannot find journeymen to train under due to the restrictive apprenticeship ratios. Why at this time are you blocking access to training for young people when they need it most? Premier, as we emerge from this economic recession, why is your government

forcing our young people to look for training and work in other provinces?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A little bit of history always helps. Let's take a look at what my honourable colleagues did when they served in government. They cut funding to apprenticeship and training programs by 73%. They offered no support whatsoever to businesses to hire and train apprentices. We put all kinds of supports in place.

We're bringing a different approach. We're celebrating apprenticeships in Ontario. We have a new College of Trades. They have a specific responsibility when it comes to establishing these kinds of ratios. We have confidence in our tradespeople, we have confidence in our college, and we have confidence in the people who sit in that college. We look forward to finding ways to continue to work with our tradespeople and our apprentices.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. We have a rotation within question period. The rotation has now moved to the NDP, and I would just ask the honourable minister and the honourable members over here within the Conservative caucus to give that opportunity to the MPP of the rotation. If you don't like the answer, you know there are rules within the standing orders that you can call for a late show.

Let's give the NDP the opportunity—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, perhaps you want to ask the question because you could do a better job.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As I was reminded this morning, there are eight and a half weeks left in this session.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need help from the armchair Speaker from Renfrew.

New question.

DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, a while back you appointed Mr. Ritter as the person who's going to be in charge of the independent fact-finding panel set up by your ministry. It turns out that Mr. Ritter worked for the federal department that was responsible for the approval and the use of Agent Orange at the time he was working there. How independent can he be if he is in fact the very person who is responsible for the approval of Agent Orange in the first place?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm really pleased to have an opportunity to talk about Dr. Ritter because I haven't been able to talk about his qualifications since March 11, when we first announced him leading the panel. This is an extraordinarily important issue for the people of Ontario. I want people to know how well qualified he is to lead this panel and look into the application of 2,4,5-T by Ontario ministries and agencies back in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and possibly the 1980s.

He holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Queen's University, and he's been a tenured professor of toxicology at the school of environmental sciences at the University of Guelph. Prior to his appointment at the University of Guelph, Dr. Ritter held various positions at Health Canada, including the director of the bureau of veterinary drugs, the chief of product safety, and the chief of the pesticides division. Since joining the University of Guelph, he has led the Canadian Network of Toxicology Centres and coordinated a national metals research network. He's very well qualified for this position, and I look forward to his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, this guy was in charge of the environmental health directorship at the time that Agent Orange was being used. I asked you the question. I don't doubt that he's qualified, that he went to all these schools and got all those degrees. That's not the issue. The issue is, he was at the federal department that allowed the use of Agent Orange at the time, and my question to you is, why would you appoint somebody who clearly had a vested interest in the use of Agent Orange? Truly, this cannot be an independent individual who's going to do the review.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I think the member may be confused about the meaning of the word "independent," so I just want to read into the record the Oxford Dictionary meaning of the word "independent." It's "free from outside control; not subject to another's authority," "self-governing," "not belonging to or supported by a political party," "capable of thinking or acting for oneself," "not influenced by others." It means somebody who's "impartial."

If the honourable member is still confused, he can come and see me after question period.

At the end of the day, researchers and people who do the kind of work that Dr. Ritter does are peer-reviewed. They have a responsibility to make sure that the facts and the information they bring forward are scientifically rigorous, that they can provide that level of information.

I have confidence in Dr. Ritter. We think he's very well qualified. We're extraordinarily lucky to have somebody of his calibre working on this project. This is very important to the people of Ontario, and I expect that his report will provide some answers and more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, constituents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham want to know that their children are being equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary

to compete in the workforce of tomorrow. Parents in my riding want to know that this government is taking steps to ensure that their children receive the best education and come out as well-rounded individuals.

Specifically, kids need to understand how to manage their finances in the future. Minister, can I tell parents in my riding about the measures that this government is taking to better educate students about financial literacy?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to talk about the fact that our government is always reviewing our curriculum to ensure that it's providing students with the information they need. To that end, our government did establish a working group on financial literacy. It was co-chaired by Leeanna Pendergast and Tom Hamza, who is the president of the Investor Education Fund. They were asked to provide information and recommendations to the curriculum council about financial literacy in both the elementary and secondary panel.

The new financial literacy resources, tools and training are being developed as we speak, and almost $2 million in funding has been obtained from the Ontario Securities Commission and support from the Investor Education Fund.

This is very clearly a partnership with the private sector working with educators to ensure that students will have the financial literacy that they need to enable them to be successful when they leave our school system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

A friendly reminder to members: Today, during routine proceedings, the House will pay tribute to the life and career of Eric Dowd, and I would encourage as many members as possible to be here in the chamber.

Following the tribute, starting at 4 p.m., there will be a meet-and-greet with the Dowd family in the Speaker's apartment, and an invitation to all members, staff and members of the press gallery to join us as we commemorate our good friend Eric Dowd.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: As I speak, we are being joined in the west members' gallery by some visitors from Community Living York South. They are: Doug Chafe, Michael Piechota, Debbie Sakaguchi, Andrea Maccarone, Gajen Paramalingham, Adriano Curatolo, Jackie Watts, Lloyd Chafe, Cathy Johnston and Carmen Kosem. Please help me in welcoming them.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to introduce some visitors from the United Nations Association in Canada here in the gallery: Larry Hebb, president of the United Nations Association in Canada; Janis Alton, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace; Dr. Douglas Alton, Physicians for Global Survival; Professor Helmut Burkhardt, Council on Global Issues; Adele Buckley, Canadian Pugwash Group; and Dianne Leggatt, IHTEC.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce another member of the recreational vehicle group that is here today. I'd encourage members to go to the reception this evening as well. I had time to meet today with Roland Goreski, who is well known in my area. I thank him for informing members of the two issues they're speaking to the House about today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CTV OTTAWA

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Peter Jennings, Rich Little, Sandra Oh and my favourite, Alanis Morissette—all recognized names by television audiences the world over. All these familiar names, I might add, got their start at CJOH in Ottawa, owned by the E.L. Bushnell Television Company. I am pleased to be joined today by my colleague from Ottawa Centre, Yasir Naqvi, to celebrate CJOH's—now CTV Ottawa's—50th anniversary in broadcasting.

I'd also like to thank the station for its numerous achievements and contributions to our community over the years, from one of my favourite childhood TV shows, You Can't Do That on Television, to the nightly news broadcast by big names like Max Keeping, Carol Anne Meehan and Graham Richardson.

CTV Ottawa has been a staple in eastern Ontario homes for the past 50 years. Ever the family-oriented station, it was Max Keeping who ensured that the nightly news was kid-friendly. I can tell you that, as a parent, we all welcomed that throughout our region. The CHEO telethon and fundraisers for the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, as well as for many Kiwanis Clubs throughout our community, have proved that CTV Ottawa is more than just a local broadcaster; they are the bedrock of our community because of the community work that they do through their local charity work.

Whether it is our on-air personalities like Kimothy Walker, Leigh Chapple or J.J. Clarke, or those who are behind the scenes, like John Crupi or John Ruttle, the good folks at CTV Ottawa prove every day why this station has been Ottawa's television station for 50 years strong.

To my friends at CTV, I want to say thank you for 50 years, and here's to another 50.

Ladies and gentlemen, up next: Yasir Naqvi.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): His correct title is the member from Ottawa Centre.

CTV OTTAWA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to the member from Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod, for giving a shout-out to CTV Ottawa on

their 50th anniversary. What an incredible organization in our community, which is not only playing a very important role in terms of giving us news, information and programming, but also doing incredible work in our community, building the community one by one.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the many people and faces that really make CTV Ottawa. We know the faces we see on TV: Max Keeping, who is now a community ambassador who continues to do more work in the community than he did when he was an anchor on the 6 o'clock news; Leanne Cusack; Michael O'Byrne; Graham Richardson; Carol Anne Meehan; Leigh Chapple; Kimothy Walker; and the list goes on and on—people like J.J. Clarke and Eric Longley.

But most importantly, the people we don't see are all the camera crew who come out to every single event. Rain or shine, here they are with their cameras covering those community events, making sure that members of our communities are getting the recognition they deserve—the support staff, the technicians who have worked very hard behind the scenes through good times and bad times over the last 50 years of CTV Ottawa.

Thank you very much for being such an important part of the community. Thank you very much for providing the support you have provided over all these years to make sure that people in Ottawa feel included and their stories are portrayed and represented through your television station. Congratulations, CTV Ottawa.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: I've lost count of the number of phone calls, emails and faxes I receive every week from constituents outraged with the cost of their hydro bills.

Thanks to Premier McGuinty's costly green energy experiments, my constituents Anne and John Ridley's hydro bill has skyrocketed from roughly $200 a month in January last year to over $600 a month in the same billing period. Since the government seems to have trouble with math, I'll do it for them: That's a 200% increase in hydro costs for a family trying to heat a two-bedroom home, a family that also uses propane for heating to keep their costs down.

My constituents are tired of the McGuinty Liberals' smart meters, which are nothing more than tax machines. The McGuinty government is simply out of touch with the people of this province.

Hydro One has made it clear to me that they only investigate cases when bills go up by 300% or more. They won't be investigating the bill of Anne and John Ridley.

Last year, Hydro One investigated over 8,000 cases where prices had gone up over 300%. But how many more thousands have increases almost as large?

While the Premier continues to boast how he is saving my constituents 10% on their monthly bills, they are left with a bill that has skyrocketed 200% in the last year. This government needs to stop coming up with ploys to get Liberals re-elected and start dealing with the mess that they have created with their expensive energy experiments.

ONTARIO EARLY YEARS CENTRES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to talk about the Ontario early years centres and the vital role they play in York South–Weston.

Ontario early years centres are supportive, welcoming and accessible places where parents or caregivers and children can play and learn together.

Recently, I had the opportunity to join parents and families at the York South–Weston Early Years Centre, followed by a visit to the Falstaff site, one of six satellite locations in the riding, as part of a city-wide initiative to highlight and celebrate the important role these centres play. Both events were very well-attended—parents, children and families excited to participate and show their appreciation for these valuable centres.

Targeted towards children from infancy up to six years of age, the early years centres offer a wide range of interactive and engaging programs that help develop social, communication and early literacy skills that are associated with success in school and in life. Parents and caregivers can learn about child growth and development, meet other parents and caregivers, share parenting experiences with professional staff and find out about other community services. The staff also provides culturally appropriate services, many of which are available in several languages, a tremendously vital component in York South–Weston and around our diverse province.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: This week, public hearings began in Courtice in my riding of Durham on the proposed Darlington new-build nuclear project.

I'm proud to say that Durham is home to over 30% of Ontario's power supply generated by nuclear energy at the Darlington and Pickering plants.

This new project is an important piece of Ontario's long-term power supply needs. Durham supports, has been and will continue to be a willing host community. Nuclear power is carbon-free, safe and reliable power. We do appreciate and listen to the issues unfolding in Japan.

1510

According to the Clarington Board of Trade, the construction of the station would mean 3,500 construction jobs, 1,500 permanent jobs and $600 million in GDP growth in our economy in Ontario.

This project needs to be a team approach. Premier McGuinty has used the old blame game of the federal government for delay. Instead of foot-dragging, we need collaboration with the ACL. In fact, there are three natural partners. They would be the federal government, which I agree is important as a regulator, and the Candu industry itself, as well as the province of Ontario, whose

baseload is nuclear. Let's quit stalling on this important issue to Ontario's economy.

It's important also that nuclear power, from commission to decommissioning, be priced openly and transparently. I call on you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Toronto–Danforth.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There's a severe problem in this province with wait times for neurological diagnosis and treatment. A constituent of mine, Thane Mitchell, came to see me a few weeks ago. He was in pain. He couldn't get an appointment here to have an MRI of his spinal problems; he had to go to the United States. It was determined that there was severe compression of the nerve root at L5. He was told he would have to wait six months before he could see anybody here in Ontario. He's in a lot of pain. He can't work. He has to stay on his back most of the day. He can't bring in employment and he can't get an analysis or a recommendation for treatment.

The Minister of Health has to recognize that telling people they have to wait half a year or longer before they even get an appointment for a diagnosis is completely unacceptable. Once he has that appointment, once the diagnosis is made, then many months will have to be waited before he actually has an opportunity to be treated.

People need to be able to work; they need to be able to be free of pain. Clearly, this Minister of Health is not attending to wait times and is leaving people in impossible situations.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Pat Hoy: Many families in Chatham–Kent–Essex are benefiting from full-day kindergarten this year. It is undeniable that strong reading and writing skills are essential for success. The earlier children learn those skills, the better prepared they are for future learning. Every year, even more children and their families are going to have access to this innovative new program. By fall of 2012, even more schools in my riding will be offering the program: Tecumseh Public School, Queen Elizabeth Public School, Merlin Area Public School, St. Michael Catholic School, St. Ursula Catholic School, East Mersea Public School, St. Joseph Catholic School, Ridgeview Moravian Elementary and Saint-Michel Catholic Elementary School.

To ensure these schools are ready to welcome students, school boards will receive funding to build and renovate classrooms. Full-day kindergarten also helps our busy working families. Parents will have peace of mind knowing their children are in a safe and engaging learning environment all day long.

Our government believes that early learning is one of the most important investments we can make and will lead to Ontario's long-term competitive advantage. Working together, we can give our children the best possible start in school and in life.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to a matter which is very important to me and to my constituents. On March 9, I tabled a resolution in this House that, if passed, would proclaim and recognize September 21 of each year as International Day of Peace in Ontario. September 21 of each year is recognized worldwide as the International Day of Peace.

Established by a United Nations resolution in 1981, the day affirms peace as a key international goal and provides an opportunity for individuals, organizations and nations around the globe to perform practical acts of peace on a common day. The International Day of Peace is also a day of global ceasefire and non-violence during which individuals and nations alike are invited to cease all hostility and armed conflict for a period of 24 hours.

An international day of peace in Ontario would demonstrate support for a day of peace worldwide and encourage citizens to become engaged in the promotion of peace, justice, education and sustainability. Again, I congratulate the individuals in the House today, whom I introduced earlier, who have championed this cause. I look forward to working with them to bring International Day of Peace to Ontario.

COMMUNITY LIVING YORK SOUTH

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Today, Community Living York South volunteers, participants and employees are present in the gallery. They have come to tour the Legislature and learn about the legislative process.

Since 1954, Community Living York South has worked tirelessly to help people with special needs from all backgrounds lead more fulfilling lives. Community Living York South supports both people with special needs and their families by providing support and community services, as well as educational workshops, spring and summer programs, and community outreach.

Every Thursday, three to four Community Living York South members come to my constituency office to gain valuable working skills through volunteering. Many of these volunteers came to join me in this year's Markham Santa Claus parade.

Recently, I had the opportunity to announce that Community Living York South was the recipient of a $219,000 Trillium grant from the province of Ontario, to be disbursed over the next three years. This grant is to be used toward increasing the capacity of persons living with disabilities to learn and work within the York region community.

I would like to personally thank and congratulate the chair of the board, Claudio Battaglin, and the executive director, Don Wilkinson, as well as the rest of this incredible organization, for the great success it has had in

providing valuable services to people with special needs to live, learn, grow and succeed in our community.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Bahram & Hamid Inc.

Your committee recommends that Bill Pr44, An Act respecting The Ontario Barber Association, be not reported.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted?

Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AGENCIES, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS SUNSET REVIEW ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÉEXAMEN DE L'UTILITÉ DES ORGANISMES, CONSEILS ET COMMISSIONS

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to provide for performance reviews of agencies, boards and commissions by the Assembly / Projet de loi 168, Loi prévoyant l'examen par l'Assemblée du rendement des organismes, conseils et commissions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The bill enacts the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act, 2011. The act provides for the performance review of agencies, boards and commissions by a select or standing committee of the Assembly. The committee would cease to exist five years after the provincial election of 2011.

The committee is authorized to conduct performance reviews of any agency, board or commission, or other type of entity that is a public body under the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006, or designated by regulation. The agency, board or commission must also make a business case establishing how it provides value for Ontario families. Provision is made for public participation in the review process as well.

After a performance review, the committee may recommend that an agency, board or commission continue to exist, with or without changes to its mandate, and the committee may recommend changes to improve the way the agency, board or commission fulfills its mandate and changes to improve its efficiency.

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The agency, board or commission must report its progress in making these changes, and this report must be made within the time specified by the committee. However, the committee may instead recommend that an agency, board or commission be dissolved. Before the committee can make such a recommendation, the responsible minister must be given an opportunity to make submissions about the proposed dissolution. If the assembly adopts the committee's recommendation that one or more agencies, boards or commissions be dissolved, they are dissolved on the date specified in the committee's recommendation.

The powers and duties of the committee do not affect the powers and duties of any other committee of the assembly, and the powers and duties of the minister responsible for an agency, board or commission are also not affected, except with respect to the dissolution under subsection 6(3)of the act.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT (STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE (COMITÉ PERMANENT DES RÈGLEMENTS ET DES PROJETS DE LOI D'INTÉRÊT PRIVÉ)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en ce qui concerne le Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: This bill amends the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills that the standing orders of the assembly require be established.

At present, all regulations stand permanently referred to the committee, but the committee is prevented from examining the merits of the policy or objectives to be effected by the regulations. This bill allows for the

examination and allows for any member of the assembly to make submissions to the committee for the purpose of that examination.

My bill would bring power back to the Legislature by allowing all members, even—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust that the member has read the explanatory note. Thank you.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 75 from the order of precedence for private members' public business dated March 4, 2010, be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list dated March 9, 2011, for private members' public business: Mr. Crozier, Mr. Flynn and Mr. Orazietti exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Crozier assumes ballot item number 64, Mr. Flynn assumes ballot item number 8 and Mr. Orazietti assumes ballot item number 1; and Mr. Delaney and Mr. Caplan exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Delaney assumes ballot item number 53 and Mr. Caplan assumes ballot item number 2; and Mr. Arthurs and Mr. Zimmer exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Arthurs assumes ballot item number 49 and Mr. Zimmer assumes ballot item number 6; and Mr. Hoy and Mr. Craitor exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Hoy assumes ballot item number 33 and Mr. Craitor assumes ballot item number 7.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the following amendment be made to the membership of certain committees: The member from Leeds–Grenville replaces the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka on the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm not sure this is a point of order, but you will let me know.

It is interesting, in the motion just before the one you read, where there are these ballot item changes—I found it just quite prophetic that Mr. Arthurs, beginning with "A," was switching places with Mr. Zimmer, beginning with the letter "Z." It takes me to the biblical reference to, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." It would behoove each and every one of us to think about that more often as we carry out our daily business in this House, referencing to how, even in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Mr. Arthurs, "A," is quite willing to switch places with Mr. Zimmer, "Z."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for his point of order. It's not a point of order, but the unfortunate thing is that the way the standing orders have been changed in this place, we no longer have the opportunity to have spontaneous speeches like that and good filibusters like we used to enjoy in the past.

As the members know, this afternoon we're going to be presenting a tribute to the family of Eric Dowd. They are just on their way to the chamber right now. I would ask for the co-operation of the members, if we could take a brief adjournment. They are on their way to the Speaker's gallery.

Is there consent amongst the members to proceed with petitions? Agreed? Agreed.

PETITIONS

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township:

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities

strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found $12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

1530

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Jake Lombardo from USW Local 1005, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Grace to bring it to the Clerk.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I agree with this petition and send it to the table via page Riley.

ERIC DOWD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to presume leave of the House, and I'm going to revert to motions.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Eric Dowd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to welcome the Dowd family here in the assembly today for this tribute from all parties to the legendary Eric Dowd.

Former Queen's Park reporter Jim Coyle tells a story about how, in the 1960s, the boys used to go down to the Royal York at night for drinks, and Eric Dowd used to call the Royal York every once in a while, when the boys were down there having a good time, to get a good quote for one of his stories.

On one particular evening, then-Premier John Robarts, for whatever reason at the time, was having some difficulty coming up with something good to say for his story; it may have been rather late in the evening. So Premier Robarts decided to defer to Eric. In fact, Premier Robarts told him to come up with a quote on his own—something that sounded a lot like Robarts. I'm sure that Eric did him proud. I'm not sure if I would do the same.

Those were different times.

Eric Dowd was a true newspaper man, a nighthawk who at times, I'm told, could be a bit on the cantankerous side, although I didn't know him that way. Whenever I saw Eric in the hallway he was extraordinarily pleasant, always asking about Debbie and my daughter, Miller. He had a fantastic memory, as well, for folks who had served as part of my staff over the years, asking about them and about their kids. That's the Eric Dowd I always knew in my time here at Queen's Park.

But he never lost that ability to cut with a rapier-sharp wit. He cut into politicians with a surgical procedure, but he always had a smile for the cleaning staff, the cafeteria workers, the security guards, the staff here at Queen's Park, not only because he respected how hard they worked and what they did; Eric also knew they had the juiciest behind-the-scenes stories.

Eric was our connection to a bygone era of typewriters, typesetting and teletype, before recorders replaced shorthand and search engines replaced clipping books and paper files.

I am told that Eric had a very elaborate filing system of his own consisting of every clipping and Hansard copy going back likely to 1963, when he first started writing here at Queen's Park. He used to come by our office pretty much every night at 5 p.m. to chat about the day's events, ask my staff how they were doing, how they were enjoying their work, and then collect his newspapers for his own personal archives. There are various ways the gallery describes Eric's old office—I guess now Robert Benzie has moved in and calls it home—but perhaps my favourite is that Eric's office would have made the fire marshal need the defibrillator.

Just like the search engines today and probably almost as quickly, Eric knew where every piece of paper was, and he could produce any needed Hansard from 2011 to 1963—bill, column or quote practically on demand. Having that kind of information, that library, that recollection immediately on hand, were key to Eric's writing. That uncanny ability to see patterns and to give us lessons about the past and insight into the future—that's what a lot of his columns were all about.

In his last column published two days before he passed, Eric wrote how Winston Churchill once used the phrase "terminological inexactitude" to question—how would I say it in the rules of Parliament?—the veracity of one of his opponent's statements. The headline for that column was "Humorous Rhetoric Is Gone from Queen's Park." It was a very fitting farewell from Eric, someone who could always make us laugh and, most importantly, make us laugh at ourselves—a brilliant column. An absolutely touching description by one of his daughters—was it Charlotte?—at the funeral service talked about Eric even in his last days, body weakening, mind still sharp as a tack. Every word in the right order, grammatically correct, no spelling errors—that's the story of his last column, a brilliant column and a legendary column.

Another funny story was about how Eric used to sideline in his spare time filing stories back into the UK. In 1984, then-Transportation Minister Jim Snow was lambasted in the British press for allegedly touching the Queen when he helped her down from the podium while visiting, which, of course, is a royal faux pas back home. The news of the world trumpeted the headline "Hands Off Our Queen" and accused Snow of accosting Her Royal Highness. What wasn't known was that, all the while, Eric was feverishly filing stories back to the UK papers about the incident. When a few folks noticed a few extra bucks in his pocket, he later confided to his Queen's Park brethren that not only was he filing under his name but several other names as well.

In a tribute piece following his death, Christina Blizzard wrote in the Toronto Sun that John Robarts once asked Eric about his family. He told the reporter that he saw them at Union Station and how lovely they looked. Eric later said he was so flattered by the comment, considering in reality what was happening in the difficult personal life of Premier Robarts. Here was the second most powerful man in Canada envying what Eric had, a lovely family.

So many of them are joining us here today, the envy of the Premier of the province and something Eric was so justifiably proud of. For 42 years, you shared Eric with us here at Queen's Park. We thank all of you.

They say that the fourth estate is a check on government, to hold elected officials' feet to the fire and make sure that we do what we say. In Eric Dowd's case, he was true to that mantra right to his last days. Even on his deathbed, writing his last column, he reminded all of us of who we are, where we've come from and, with good work and Eric's advice, what we can all be. Thank you very much for sharing Eric Dowd with us for 42 years.

1540

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I wish to preface my remarks by thanking those who have come here today—I hope I have them all: Georgina Dowd, Eric's wife; Dominic Dowd, Megan Davies, Madeline Dowd, James Dowd, Sophie Dowd, Katherine Dowd, Charlotte Eidt, Elizabeth Dowd, Charlotte Dowd, Thomas Dowd, Corrine Maloney and Jude Dowd. I think that says a great deal about the love of this family for Eric Dowd.

By the time I arrived here in this Legislature, Eric Dowd was already known as the dean of Queen's Park. I've been here for 10 years, and he was already the dean. People who knew him knew him well. He had been writing stories about this place and in this place for a long time, mostly—almost exclusively—since he came to this country from England.

Those who followed his career knew him as a tough, disciplined, honest, forthright and very, very intelligent man who knew how to write, who knew how to put words together that would excite the public to want to read more about what happens at Queen's Park.

When he died, two columns were written about him that were particularly striking to me. One was by John Downing, who had spent considerable time around here himself. In half a sentence he said pretty much everything that needs to be told, and I quote him: "No one who ever spent time with Eric will forget him." And Christina Blizzard wrote: "Eric Dowd was every bit an old-time journalist with a nose for news and an unrelenting passion for reporting it."

The stories around this place—you've heard some of them from the Leader of the Opposition, but Eric liked to tell some too, and other people have told me stories about things he did. Probably the most famous one of all did not involve this House. That's when he got a phone call to come down and meet four boys from Liverpool on their first tour through Toronto. Of all the journalists who were invited, he just happened to know some of the people from his former homeland and his former city, and they invited him down to cover that. I think if you ask people around Canada today, that might be the story they remember best.

He also wrote good stories about Premier Robarts, one of which has been recounted. John Downing wrote a very good one about Eric's holding off an Italian carabiniere

in Rome to protect Premier Davis after he made some kind of faux pas by throwing coins into the Trevi Fountain. In any event, that's the kind of man he was, and that's what we remember him for.

But those of us who came a little later to Queen's Park knew him as a quiet gentleman, a man who would come by your office from time to time to talk about his family and your family and about the 65 years he had spent doing his journalistic career. He would often drop by my office for chats. Particularly, he found a way to come on Mondays. I don't know whether that's because he found out that that was the day I brought in baking, or because that was just the day he was most free, but he would drop by for a little snack in the afternoon. He would talk about events, he would give scholarly and fatherly advice, and he would take a few chocolates on the way out and go off to whatever he was doing.

But sometimes he would drop by not on Monday afternoons; he would drop by, literally, almost in the dead of night. My light would be on in the office—I was trying to get caught up on some work—there would be a gentle knock on the door, it would open up and there, at 10 or 11 o'clock at night, would be Eric saying, "I saw your light on. I just wanted to drop by and make sure you were all right. And by the way, can I sit down and have a chat?" We had many of those.

He talked about Canada. He talked about provincial politics. He talked about his family but rarely about himself. In that, I guess he was a quintessential Canadian.

Until the last few months, when he became much, much slower, he confided in a great many people. I know he confided in me about the cancer, about the chemotherapy, about the things that were happening to him. But every single day that I can remember, he was still here at work, every single day right up until the end. I saw him in that week before Christmas, still hard at work, still doing what he loved.

At the funeral, which many of us had the privilege of attending, there were family and friends, politicians, journalists and staff from Queen's Park, all of whom spoke brilliantly and lovingly of the man. All were better for having known him—those whom he mentored as new writers, his encyclopedic knowledge of this place, his sage advice and his encouragement for all. He truly loved this building and he truly loved the people who work in it. What a remarkable way for him to have made his living.

To his wife Georgina, to his five children—Katherine, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Tom and Dominic—we send our condolences, and we thank you for a lifetime of sharing.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to rise with my colleagues who have already risen in the House and those who are able to be with us today and those who are watching to pay tribute to Eric Dowd, who was a very close, personal friend of mine for the 34 years that I've been in the Ontario Legislature.

In fact, Eric was one of the first people to greet me when I was newly elected. I was very green at the time, very lacking in the knowledge of the intricacies of provincial politics as it relates to this House. Eric provided, as he did to so many of us who were new—whether in our capacity as MPPs or in our capacity as, perhaps, journalists, and others in the building—sage advice for us.

This time is usually reserved for tributes to members of the Legislature who are deceased, and we recall and remember them. It's a tribute to Eric Dowd and to members of his family that this time has been reserved for a person who was one of the journalists here.

But we recognize that Eric wasn't just one of the journalists; he was one for whom we have all, regardless of our political affiliation, our ridings or our backgrounds, had a personal liking for and an affection that is probably unequalled. So it is appropriate that we have taken the time in this Legislature to pay tribute to an individual who was here for so many years, starting with Premier Robarts and right up to Premier McGuinty, one who has seen many come and go in this House while he sat in the seat that today has a floral tribute to him.

Most of us would walk into the House and look up at the gallery, where the floral tribute is today, and give a smile or a wave to Eric. We also knew that we were going to get notes of some kind. My friend Monique Smith, the member from Nipissing, showed me a note that she received from Eric in December. Of course, his health was failing but his affection for us and concern for others was not failing in any way. He mentions in the note knowing Monique's father, Dick Smith, who was a member of this Legislature, and saying that Dick Smith would be very proud of his daughter being a member of the Legislature.

That was Eric. He knew everybody. He knew everybody's families; he knew our friends; he knew staff, as our colleagues have said. There was nobody too unimportant in this place for Eric to talk to. He spoke to virtually everybody. He was, as Rudyard Kipling once said of people, someone who could walk with kings and keep the common touch. He, indeed, walked with royalty, in a literal sense, and kept the common touch for all of us. I know that each one of us, today, has a feeling for him that we would express to our colleagues and to our friends.

When I went looking for material—because sometimes, remember, when there were tributes to people who had died or at least served some years ago and were members of the House, if you couldn't find as much material as you would like to pay tribute to that person, you went to Eric's office.

1550

Now, I have to confess that Eric's filing system looks like my filing system. There is a program on television called Hoarders now that would describe Eric's office. I've tried to emulate it, but nobody could emulate Eric's office and his system. But he provided the material. If you needed some material of an historical nature, Eric had, as has been mentioned, either the Hansard or the clipping itself.

We all recognize as well—and this was said at the funeral—that there was no such thing as a short con-

versation with Eric Dowd. Once he had you in a headlock in the hallway, you knew that the conversation was going to be lengthy. But it was always, invariably, interesting. It took into account Eric's views on things, because he was happy to share them with you, but also inquiries about some background information that perhaps others in today's day of journalism would not be so concerned about. We appreciated that very much.

We knew about the family. All of us could name the members of the family because Eric told us about the family. He was extremely proud of them when he was here in the House and was prepared to share that.

He had an institutional memory that is necessary. It's good to have a variety of people, just as in the House, where we have new members and those who have been here a few extra years. Eric was the person who was the institutional memory for everyone. People went to Eric because he knew where the bodies were buried, he knew where the scandals were in years gone by, and he knew the issues and how they bubbled up around the province. I often thought that when we went to chains purchasing all of the newspapers in the province, and the independent papers were gone, many of the chains missed the kind of perspective Eric would have that would have added to the others who are part of the reporting and journalistic part of this Legislature, because Eric did have a perspective that was different.

He was a defender of the underdog, without a doubt. He despised those who used their position of privilege in an inappropriate fashion. He was a crusader against corruption. He was a person who knew that there were many people in this world who came from very modest roots, and that those of us who are elected and those who are journalists should never forget that those people count as well. In fact, with Eric, they counted very much.

He would play a game, at least with me, and perhaps with others. I would ask him how things were. He at one time lived in Rosedale. We would make fun of him for living in Rosedale because it's reputed to be a place where people of some distinction and money happen to reside. I don't know if that's true or not, but Eric would talk about his neighbours who were very prominent, and we would kid about that. He would talk about the servants and so on in a very jocular fashion. But that was Eric. He had just a marvellous, marvellous sense of humour that I think all of us appreciated very much.

As I mentioned, he was not occupied with the horse race; Eric was occupied with other kinds of issues. He was occupied with people. He had a good read on people, he was a good judge of people, but he was not judgmental. He could certainly perceive the attributes of people and always brought out the positive attributes in them. He knew our failings as well, and from time to time was prepared to share those with the readers, as he actually should.

Now, I don't want to get myself in trouble with members of the press gallery today, but they all have television sets that they can watch question period from now. We have monitors in our place as well. But Eric, every day, showed up at question period, and he could see the look of angst on a minister's face—probably mine when I was getting a good question from someone in the opposition—or that smile of satisfaction if someone had made a good point in the Legislature. Being in that position as he was, and some of us went up to see him from time to time, he was able to make, I think, some astute judgments.

You should know, as I think many of you did, that he had a bicycle. Another thing Eric and I have in common is both being terrible nighthawks. I would be walking back to my apartment and Eric would have his bicycle. Instead of riding it, he would be walking his bicycle along and sharing with me some of his philosophy of the day. But no matter what the weather out there, you could see Eric putting the helmet on in recent years and riding that bicycle.

He loved royalty. He loved talking about royalty, at least, and wrote some good columns about royalty, which I think were important to people here who are royalists or monarchists.

Premier McGuinty was quoted as saying something about Eric I think all of us would agree with: "Eric has been a fixture at Queen's Park for decades, and every single day he showed an incredible dedication to his craft and a genuine passion for journalism.

"I was sad to learn of Eric's passing. He will be missed by his readers and by all of us who had the pleasure of knowing him."

It is a difficult day for all of us as we pay tribute to Eric. I know that his friends in the press gallery and those who were in the press gallery in years gone by will all have stories of Eric—his walking down the hallway late at night, his dropping in for a snack or two with any one of us in any of the political parties, and his sharing of stories that were endless, stories that we enjoyed.

I thought that an appropriate ending for a tribute of this kind was one I read that Chris Blizzard had in the Toronto Sun. She ended her eulogy, if you want to call it that way in a newspaper—an obituary, if you will—for Eric, saying the following, and I think it's something we can all relate to: "After 65 years in journalism, the light has gone out in Dowd's office. The old Underwood is silent. And somehow Queen's Park will never be the same." Indeed, it will not.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to thank all the honourable members for their wonderful comments today. Again, a big thank you to the Dowd family who are here, seated in the Speaker's gallery today. It is such an honour to have you here.

I think you've heard today how much collectively on both sides of this House everyone misses Eric, as do I, because I have had the pleasure, having lived in this building for the past three and a half years, of having experienced those late-night visits with Eric. Whether it was a little note slipped under my door—I've learned more about a septic system at a cottage than I ever thought I would learn. I can assure you he did eat very well at Queen's Park. He never went without. The doors were open in every office for him.

I want to thank the Minister of Community Safety, because he made reference to it. Jim Bradley is a true disciple of your father. We needed something for today that you will see will be presented to you, and we couldn't find a copy of it. So my staff contacted Minister Bradley's office and, lo and behold, in one of those infamous boxes of Jim Bradley, we found exactly what we needed, and he got that from your father.

So on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Clerk and all the staff—and I mean every staff member here at the Legislature—our deepest condolences, but rest assured that that memory of Eric is going to live on for a long time within this building. I will ensure that copies of today's Hansard and a DVD of today's proceedings are left with you, Georgina, and copies for all of your family.

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to all members, any guests who are here, staff who are watching in their offices, members of the press gallery, to join us for a reception in the Speaker's apartment that will be taking place just following the conclusion of this. Thank you.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the hallmark of a free society is the right of the individual to the use and enjoyment of property; and

"Whereas the property rights include the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly pass the property rights motion tabled by the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and take the necessary steps to enshrine property rights in the constitution of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it.

1600

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that was gathered by Shawn Haggerty, who is the president of UFCW Local 175, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sydney to bring it to the Clerk.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine," especially at Lakeridge Road.

I'm pleased to present this to Grace, one of the pages here at Queen's Park.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

As I am in agreement, I've affixed my signature and give it to page Travis.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario will be the first government to close its coal-fired electricity generation; and

"Whereas many countries continue to build coal-fired electricity generation, including Canada; and

"Whereas the CO_2 concentration in the atmosphere was historically around 286 parts per million; and

"Whereas the present concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere is 390 parts per million; and

"Whereas in 2014, when our last coal-fired plants will be closed, the CO_2 will be 400 parts per million, and by the year 2030, the CO_2 will exceed 450 parts per million; and

"Whereas many scientists believe that a level of 450 parts per million of CO_2 in our atmosphere will be catastrophic for the environment as we know it;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request the government of Canada to change their pro-CO_2 policies and provide leadership on mitigation of climate change."

I will put my name on that petition and send it up with Travis.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Collingwood Street bridge, built in 1913, located in the township of Clearview, in the county of Simcoe, is scheduled for destruction and replacement;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To have the bridge declared to have significant historical value under the Heritage Act, protecting it from destruction; and

"To have the bridge restored while maintaining the existing structure."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Orleans urgent care centre provides emergency care for the residents of Orleans, utilizing many of the same capabilities along with the medical facilities and the equipment available at a hospital emergency department. The OUCC is equipped to administer treatment for serious, acute medical conditions, including heart attack, asthma, fractures and dislocations, lacerations and allergic reactions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"As the funding is up for renewal, to continue to provide funding to the Orleans urgent care centre to allow this clinic to stay open evenings and weekends to support the health needs of the community of Orleans and surrounding areas."

I am very pleased to support this petition. I give it to Riley to take to the desk.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government have continued to ignore farmers and have slashed support to farmers by over $145 million in 2010 alone; and

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario continue to struggle to feed those in need; and

"Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support farm families and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Grace.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Phil McNeely: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this government supports full-day kindergarten in all schools; and

"Whereas full-day kindergarten was introduced in Our Lady of Wisdom Catholic School, Convent Glen public school, École élémentaire catholique Sainte-Marie, Brother André Catholic School, École élémentaire publique Des Sentiers and École élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin in Ottawa-Orléans in September 2010; and

"Whereas it is the government's intention to introduce full-day kindergarten in Fallingbrook Community Elementary School and Blessed Kateri Catholic school in Ottawa-Orléans schools in September 2011; and

"Whereas the government intends to fully implement full-day kindergarten in all schools by 2015; and

"Whereas parents of four- and five-year-olds have supported this program; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party of Ontario has said that they would freeze this program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support full-day kindergarten and to follow the implementation schedule which will complete the program by 2015."

I proudly include my signature on that petition and send it up with Devon.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

As I am in agreement, I will affix my signature to give it to page Logan.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

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"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier" McGuinty's government "and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs"—community care access centres—"across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment" where and when they need it, immediately.

I'm pleased to sign in support and endorse this and present it to Travis, one of the pages.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting $15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians, including the people of Elmvale."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 22, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law

(Sex Offender Registry), 2000; that's also the short title of the bill. I'd like to mention, first of all, the explanatory note inside the bill. I'd like to put that on the record because it is a bill that basically aligns itself with recent changes made to the national sex offender registry via Bill S-2 from the federal Parliament. The changes are amending the requirement of offenders "to report within 15 days after or before various events so that the number of days will in the future be specified by regulation rather than in the act."

It's requiring offenders who have been convicted of a sex offence outside of Canada and have been ordered to report to the national registry to also report to the Ontario registry, and it's allowing the Ontario registry to maintain the records of registered offenders who receive a pardon under the Criminal Records Act.

"Clauses 3(1)(a) to (e) and 7(2)(a) and (b) of Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000, which require offenders to report within 15 days after or before various events, are amended so that the numbers of days will in the future be specified by regulation rather than in the act.

"The act is also amended to provide that if an offender who was convicted, or found not criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder, outside Canada becomes subject to an obligation to report under the Sex Offender Information Registration Act (Canada) after he or she arrives in Canada—by virtue of section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code (Canada) or section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act (Canada)—the offender will be obliged to report under Christopher's Law, too. These new reporting obligations are reflected in the new clauses 3 (1)(e.1) and (e.2), the new clauses (b.2) and (b.3) of the definition of 'sex offence' in subsection 1(1), and the new subsections 8(1.5) and (1.6) respecting reporting periods.

"Subsection 1(1) of the act is amended to define 'pardon' as a free pardon granted under Her Majesty's royal prerogative of mercy or under section 748 of the Criminal Code (Canada) or a pardon or record suspension under the Criminal Records Act (Canada). The new section 9.1, which replaces the former subsection 9(3), requires the ministry to delete references to an offender from the sex offender registry if the offender receives a free pardon for every sex offence in respect of which the act applies to him or her, but not if the offender receives only a pardon or record suspension under the Criminal Records Act (Canada). However, an offender's reporting requirement ceases under subsection 7(4) of the act if the offender receives either a free pardon or a pardon or record suspension under the Criminal Records Act (Canada)."

I always like to include the explanatory note in my debate. In the end, as we go through this bill, I have to say right up front that we're very, very supportive of this legislation and supportive of the record of the federal government with respect to law and order, and believe we have to keep the Ontario sex offender registry in tip-top condition and right up to date with the latest legislation.

This is not the first time the bill has been amended. It was amended in 2007, and I have some comments on that as well before I comment on the bill and put some things on the record with respect to the Ontario Provincial Police and the OPP general headquarters up in Orillia.

Some background: Following a 1992 inquest into the brutal murder of 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson by a convicted pedophile, a coroner's jury recommended the creation of a mechanism to register convicted and dangerous sex offenders with the local police. I should point out that Christopher's father, Jim Stephenson, was here the day the bill had first reading and has been a strong advocate for the Ontario sex offender registry to this day. I had a chance to chat with him on the day of introduction of the bill with Minister Bradley, wanting to thank him for his support and for what he's done as a result of pushing forward and convincing legislators to move forward with this kind of legislation.

Christopher's Law, the Ontario sex offender registry, was introduced by David Tsubouchi in December 1999, received royal assent on April 12, 2000, and came into force in April 2001, which means that next month will be the 10th anniversary of the Ontario sex offender registry. I know that some of the folks up at OPP general headquarters, where the registry is located, are very pleased with the progress of the registry over the years and are looking forward to some kind of celebration of the 10th anniversary.

Ontario was the first Canadian jurisdiction to create a sex offender registry, although they have existed in the United States since the 1940s. Ontario's registry is managed and maintained by the ministry's sex offender registry—SOR—unit within the Ontario Provincial Police. As I said a few minutes ago, it is located at the OPP general headquarters, which I am proud to say is located in my riding.

Before we get to the act that I read the explanatory note on, we did pass legislation in 2007, Bill 16, Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry) Amendment Act. It made amendments to the act, including imposing an obligation to report on persons who are convicted of certain designated offences, extending the situations that would trigger a reporting obligation, enhancing the information to be added to the sex offender registry and requiring police forces to attempt to verify an offender's address at least once every year.

In April 2008, the Ontario Court of Appeal dismissed the challenge by Abram Dyck of Kitchener, who argued that the registry deprived him of the right to liberty because the law required everyone convicted of a sex offence, even a minor offence, to register along with those who are at risk to reoffend, such as pedophiles or serial rapists.

As of 2007, according to the auditor's report, the sex offender registry unit continues to rely on the offender tracking information system as a prime source of information for daily updates of registry data, including any revisions to existing offender records such as sentence or release date adjustments, I'll get into that a little bit more later as I talk about touring the facility myself.

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The auditor's 2007 report also notes that the registry has been developed at moderate cost up until 2007: a budget of approximately $4 million, of which $1 million is dedicated to system development and maintenance. Now, that has gone up somewhat in the last couple of years, but again, we can move forward with that as well as I make a few other comments, when we talk directly about Bill 163 and the registry.

We had a strong auditor's report in 2007 on the registry. The act does not refer to the many offenders living in the community, such as those on day parole or in intermittent sentence programs, those awaiting appeal decisions, and in some cases those found not criminally responsible because of mental illness. The ministry has little assurance that all offenders in the federal system who live in Ontario are being systematically included in the registry. That's some of the things we found out. That's why, as we moved forward to create Bill 163, the federal government had to make adjustments to its Bill S-2.

Federal offenders temporarily detained in provincial institutions before being transferred to a federal facility are recorded in the registry with what is known as a footprint record. However, the review identified some 360 offenders—this is in the 2007 report—who appear to have been subsequently released into Ontario communities from federal custody but were not registered in the Ontario registry.

The process for deleting offender records from the registry needs improvement. In addition, the ministry had no procedures for ensuring that it was notified if a pardon was revoked so that the offender could be reregistered.

Despite basically a 95% to 97% compliance rate, local police follow-up procedures on the 384 non-compliant offenders—those who did not register or did not re-register annually—varied widely and there was no ministry guidance on what those procedures should be.

The ministry's public safety division inspections of local police services did not include activities relating to the registry at the time of the audit.

There are a number of limitations in the registry tools available to investigators that inhibit efficient searches through the list of registered offenders in the database. Registry records do not always capture all offender information required under the act that would be useful to investigators. There's little evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of registries in reducing sexual crimes or helping investigators solve them. The ministry has yet to establish performance measures for its registry. Since its inception, nearly $9 million in federal funding for registry operation was spent instead on other OPP operational areas.

So those are the problems that we actually can say we have found with the registry through the auditor's report. But keep in mind that it's a fairly new organization, only set up in 2001. As we move forward with building this registry, we need to note that we've tried to follow up with both the federal legislation and provincial improvements to make sure we improve upon and clear up any kind of problems that there can be with the registry itself.

I'm really proud of this bill, and I told that to the minister when he introduced the bill.

I did want to thank him for a couple of things: first of all, the remarkable job that both he and Mr. Hudak and Mr. Prue did this afternoon in honouring Eric Dowd. I thought this was certainly one of the nicest tributes I've seen paid in this Legislature. But I wanted to thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for allowing our office to have a briefing on this bill. The staff did an excellent job and we had a good chat about a number of things in the ministry. However, we made it clear that we were supporting the legislation. We did want to move forward with improving it, with the recommendations that would align it with the new federal legislation. I believe it still has yet to be proclaimed.

Now, when I mentioned how proud we are, the minister at the time who brought in Christopher's Law was David Tsubouchi, who is a good friend of mine and someone that I really admired in this Legislature. Certainly, I know he was one of the most popular ministers, Solicitor Generals or Ministers of Community Safety—whatever title the minister has at the time—that we've had in the province. Certainly the police community thought a lot of Minister Tsubouchi.

He brought in this bill, did substantial consultation with a number of families and identified a strong, strong need for this kind of legislation in the province of Ontario. With the support of Jim Stephenson and his family, based on the sad death of his son Christopher, this legislation was brought into force in Ontario and has since been what I would consider a real leader in registries in our country, even more so than the national sex offender registry. Keep in mind that none of the other provinces have a sex offender registry. Ontario did take the leadership role on that, and I compliment the current government for following up on Bill 16 and then, again, today on Bill 163, on amendments to this legislation.

I've talked a number of times about the few tours that I've done. Having the general headquarters in my riding, I drive by it two or three times a week, and I've got a lot of friends at the OPP general headquarters. I've actually had the opportunity do fairly substantial tours of the sex offender registry twice, and to be told by the staff and the people administrating the programs what they had there.

One of the things that has really developed out of the Ontario sex offender registry is that it has become a wonderful investigative tool for the Ontario Provincial Police, other police services in province, and even, in fact, the RCMP, who look after the national sex offender registry in the rest of Canada. I don't think that when they started out it was meant to be quite as handy for police services as it has become.

Leading up the Ontario sex offender registry are a couple of folks that I know very well, and they help me when I call and ask them for comments and information on what's actually happening. They are Adam Alderson and Jim Mascola from the Ontario sex offender registry. I

want to thank them for any information I've received from them and for the times we've had the opportunity to tour the facility.

But something that is really important to me is that I was told the number of offenders that we have in the province and how they're identified when a problem arises, if they've registered. We know that the people who are on the registry are supposed to register, and the compliance rate now is usually between 95% and 97.5%. Overall, most people who have been identified as sexual offenders do register on a regular basis, and it's only the odd one we hear about in the media who hasn't registered, and we wonder where they actually are.

One of the things that's really interesting is, when a crime is reported to a police service in Ontario, whether it be the OPP or one of the police services, they can immediately go to the Ontario sex offender registry and find out who it may be. There are thousands of names on these files, but they have a way, with their database and the technology they use, to actually zoom in on, first of all, the size of the person, the age of the person, what his preference is—for example, if he likes little boys or little girls or women or whatever it may be, all these sorts of things—and in no time they can take that example of who it may be and identify, from the particular area where the offence took place—they can pick people out of their database and immediately begin to circle in on who it possibly could be that committed the crime.

That's what I found amazing when they showed me on the computer system they have, the database, how quickly they can do that, and how they can get that information back.

What it tells me is, having that information and the fact that the offenders know that information is available about them since Christopher's Law was introduced in 2001, I can't imagine how many crimes have probably been saved—have not gone ahead, haven't taken place—because the criminals know they can be caught like that. You can imagine, if we never had the registry, what could happen—with the technology we've got today, with child pornography and with the Internet etc., how many people would have taken advantage of people if that registry didn't take place. So kudos to the staff there and to the administration of the OPP for a job really, really well done as they build this registry.

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I'm talking to people about the Ontario sex offender registry, and I understand that, as we build these improvements with added legislation, there's really an opportunity here. This may, in fact, be the top sex offender registry, certainly in North America and maybe even worldwide. That much data has been captured and that much information is available to the public.

Now, everything is not perfect, and I've asked a number of police officers, people whom I know and people whom I've chatted with, about how they felt about certain parts of it. Certainly, the fact that there's a privacy issue around it is a problem for some. Some police officers feel that somehow should be changed, so that if you're convicted, if your name is on the registry, that should be information that's available to the public. I've had police officers tell me that. I'm not going to mention their names here in the House today, but they do think that's an area of concern. And when someone who's on the sex offender registry moves into the community, the police certainly know, but the community doesn't know. Some police officers feel that their names should be posted so that the general community knows, because although they may be a convicted sex offender and they may be on the registry, that does not mean they won't reoffend. The problem we have with that, of course, is that families worry when a convicted sex offender is in the community. So that would be the downside of it.

However, I did want to point out that in the end, this registry over the years has been something that I think has saved many, many cases from actually occurring in the country, because if they were convicted in the past, the criminals know that they'll be caught again easily. It has probably prevented a lot of sexual offences from occurring in our province.

I wanted to talk also about policing in general. When you have a one-hour leadoff, Mr. Speaker, and there are only three amendments to the bill, it takes a long time to use a whole hour up. You've probably done that a number of times yourself. I can tell you, I do want to put a number of things about the OPP on the record today because I think it's a good opportunity. Again, it's in my riding, and I wanted to openly put some of these things on the record.

Since I was elected in 1999, I've had the opportunity as both an MPP in the government for four years and now in my eighth year as critic for community safety and correctional services to work under three OPP commissioners: a few years with Commissioner Gwen Boniface; the whole career of Chief Fantino as commissioner of the OPP, including the 100th anniversary of the OPP; and, of course, now with our new commissioner, Chris Lewis. He's a great guy, a person who so deserves that program because he has worked so hard throughout, starting at the very basic constable position in policing and working his way through all the different programs and divisions of the OPP until today, he is the commissioner. I think he'll be an outstanding commissioner in the years ahead.

I've had the opportunity in that time to work with things like Christopher's Law. I also had the opportunity, as I mentioned earlier, to work with David Tsubouchi. Another thing I was really proud to work with Mr. Tsubouchi on was Bill 25. Before Bill 25, OPP civilian employees belonged to OPSEU, and the Ontario Provincial Police Association felt that their civilian employees should be part of the OPP Association as well. Bill 25 allowed them to have that vote. I can remember the major story up in my riding, because both the association of the OPP and OPSEU were fighting to have the membership as part of their organizations. I can tell you that, in the end, Brian Adkin, who was president of the OPP Associ-

ation at the time, convinced his civilian employees to go to the OPPA, and they left OPSEU and joined. And I think they've had a fairly good relationship, not only at the OPP general headquarters but in all of their detachments and divisions—districts—across the province.

OPP general headquarters has some amazing programs they operate out of there. Recently, the Ontario Provincial Police moved Project P, the child pornography unit, from Downsview up to the general headquarters. I had an opportunity to actually tour one time, with the superintendent of Project P, to see what actually happens in the child pornography unit and the challenges that people face in there, and that's with all the computer systems today and the technology and the Internet going around the world. What occurs in there was just incredible, and it's actually very, very wearing on anyone who's trying to do their job effectively.

When we do a tour of an organization like Project P, there's so much information—there's privacy around all that information. But I was allowed to see quick snaps of some of the photos of some of the things that had taken place with children and babies, and I found out what a difficult job it has to be working in that unit. I know that a number of the people who work in Project P can't work there too many years. They have to move on to other parts of their career because it's very frustrating, and if you have children of your own or nephews or nieces, this is an area that you have a lot of concern with.

Also operating out of the OPP general headquarters are organizations that purchase all the equipment, that purchase the marine unit equipment. I can tell you that the OPP marine unit—and I know that anybody who's near water will have an OPP boat of some kind near them. Many of the larger boats are named after former commissioners: the Thomas O'Grady boat. More recently, one boat was named—the boat that works out of the—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Pardon me?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I was there.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Okay, yeah. A boat that was launched a year or two ago was named after Constable Tom Coffin, who was shot in a bar in Penetanguishene by a person that just went wild and brought a gun in and killed him right in the bar as he was having a cold beer after work. The OPP employees and members of the association got behind—I think at that time it was Chief Fantino—and asked if they could name that boat after him, and it was done, because it was working out of the Georgian Bay area at the time.

I had a chance to go out on Georgian Bay one day with the OPP marine unit and witnessed what they do. It was absolutely unbelievable to see the respect the OPP marine unit has in cottage country. First of all, they pull people over if they've got the wrong kind of licence for—the Minister of Natural Resources is here today. If they have the wrong fishing licence, for example, they'll check that out when they're out with the OPP and make sure that they've got the proper gear in their boat, that they've got the proper licensing for the boat.

Interjection.

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Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Pardon me? Yeah, it was OPP officers. You should go out and ride on it sometime. You know what? Really, in my opinion, they're just doing sort of a backup job for the conservation officers.

As well, they would stop people with boat problems. In a body of water the size of Georgian Bay, if they see a boat stopped somewhere, they stop and check it. Whether it's a broken engine or somebody just wanting to stop and have a swim or something like that, they keep an eye on it.

But where I really noticed the respect was when we toured through the islands—because we did it right in the middle of the summer—with the number of people who came down to their docks or would stand on their decks and wave at the OPP boat. In a lot of cases, when you're up in that part of the Muskoka or Parry Sound area, they don't get a lot of services from their municipality because there's no water or sewer or transportation. They leave their boat at a marina and they go on up the shoreline and, really, what they get is law and order. They get the security of having their cottage in safekeeping because the OPP boats are going through and watching for people that would have stolen goods or something like that. I really noticed that. That was one thing that I thought was really positive.

In the future, I think, there are some opportunities for the marine division of the OPP, and I'm hoping that some of that can actually take place in Orillia on Lake Couchiching on some land that's currently owned by the government under the Ontario Realty Corp. I know they're also negotiating with the city of Orillia etc. So we'll see what happens on that.

We have some great people in the Ontario Provincial Police as well, people that you wonder where their career takes them. A gentleman who was just recently named as director of corporate communication and executive services in the office of the commissioner is a friend of mine, a person I've known the last seven or eight years, a guy by the name of Rick Philbin. He used to be the detachment commander of the OPP out of south Georgian Bay and spent some time as a police chief working for a year in the Sudan actually teaching police chiefs in the Sudan about good policing. We all know the kind of lifestyle and problems they've had in a country like that, so it's really amazing when we can send our officers over to a foreign country and the OPP can help in that way.

I don't think a lot of people understand that in policing—people in Ontario just see the black-and-whites on the road and don't realize that we help other countries as well with some of the backup and some of the education programs. People have gone over to Ireland for training and have trained people in different parts of the world. We're quick to criticize policing forces and that sort of thing many times, but often we're not able to compliment them on some of the great programs they work on as well.

The Crime Stoppers unit is another program. It's not just the OPP; it takes in a number of police forces. But we have had a very strong OPP presence, and basically all of our community presence in the Crime Stoppers of Dufferin, Muskoka and Simcoe. I know a friend of mine, Dawn Martin, headed it up as an OPP appointee on that for the last year or so—couple of years, I should say—and has done a remarkable job recruiting volunteers. They go in and they set up these meet-and-greets and opportunities to sign up people that might possibly want to be on a Crime Stoppers committee.

I don't think everybody is aware of what exactly happens with Crime Stoppers, but it's meant for people who can report crime and not have to give their name. That gives the police a lead, and in the end it saves, in the province of Ontario alone, I believe—in fact, around the world I believe it's been billions of dollars in crime they've prevented by being able to have this program work. So we're trying very strongly—it was one strong area, and then it kind of weakened off, and now we're trying again to strongly move the Crime Stoppers forward, because anything that can help the police, anything that can be a tip for the police, is also going to save the taxpayers money. So I tip my hat to Dawn Martin, who has done great work building the Crime Stoppers team in Simcoe county.

I also wanted to talk about a friend of mine. Some of the dedication that you see in these police officers is absolutely incredible. A friend of mine whom I've known for a number of years now is a fellow by the name of David Hobson. David Hobson is a provincial constable. He's a community services officer out of the southern Georgian Bay detachment as well.

I don't know if this guy ever sleeps, because he sends out press releases all the time. That's his job: He's supposed to inform the public of what's actually happening in policing in south Georgian Bay. Whether it's weather conditions or the traffic—we've got some blowouts or snowstorms at Wasaga Beach or on Highway 92—he's on to that; he's telling the public. It comes across our BlackBerrys. Whether it's the icebreaker going into Midland harbour to allow a ship in to get rid of a load of grain at one of the mills, he puts all these things on the record and puts out releases constantly—not just to the politicians, but to all the community leaders in the media, community leaders in church organizations, in hospital organizations and to just about everyone you can imagine Dave sends these releases out, sometimes every day, sometimes two or three times a day. But the reality is, it's really good for communications and the police service that we have people like that.

He reports to Peter Leon at general headquarters. You can recall that that's how some of the people like Cam Woolley—and I often tease Dave that he's getting far more publicity up in our area than Cam Woolley, and Dave says, "Well, no; I'm getting a lot more publicity than you as the MPP, because you're always on page 2 and I'm on page 1 with the media reports." I'm seriously saying this, eh? Because he is a great guy and he just knows everybody. I'll tell you, there can't be anything happening in crime that he doesn't report on and let the media and community know, and that means all of us. I don't know how many people are on his database, but literally hundreds of people find out when something goes wrong. He does all kinds of school programs. He works with the boards of education, works with the hospitals. I just wanted to say that because he's a friend of mine and has done a great job as a community service officer. I wanted to say a few words about him today in the House.

Do you know what? I can't use up the whole hour, Mr. Speaker. I'm not really talking about Bill 163. It's just that, as I said earlier, we in this caucus support this bill. It's funny how some of these things come about. The temperature is kind of rising as you get closer to an election, even in the House here. But it's funny that you can actually have a bill, where it comes forward like this amendment bill, where you all agree to the bill. There are all kinds of issues around the federal election and Liberals and Conservatives and the provincial election coming up in the fall, so that, you know what? Things are heating up around here. However, this bill is something that I'm hoping every member of this House would support.

On top of that, my colleague from Welland will likely be debating this, and he'll definitely have some wonderful thoughts on it. It's one of the nice things about working with the member from Welland: He knows the legislation inside out and knows a lot of the past legislation. He's able to offer so much constructive criticism to legislation and, in a lot of cases, really positive amendments to the bill as well. I'll look forward to what he has to say and what kinds of amendments we might make to the bill in committee.

Overall, the PC caucus was very proud of Christopher's Law in the beginning, the lives it's helped and the lives it's probably saved. I think that the government's doing a reasonably good job by trying to immediately tie this bill into the national sex offender registry, so that we can align these bills so we don't have any problems coming up in that direction. It's only good government to do that, and we're happy to support it.

I look forward to the committee hearings. I appreciate the opportunity to speak for almost 40 minutes. I look forward to the passing of this bill, hoping that in the end, this bill will save more lives and will keep sex offenders away from people whom they could be offending.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make some comments on the Christopher's Law Amendment Act, 2011, following the speaker who just finished.

We're changing this act to bring it up to date and to make changes that are technical in nature to the sex offender registry that would—if passed, of course—align the provincial registry with recent changes made to the federal government's national sex offender registry. So

we'll have a harmonized situation in that regard, if we were to align these two pieces of legislation.

The proposed amendments address the following three areas: reporting obligations which would enable the province to require sex offenders to report within seven days instead of the current demand that it be 15 days, so it will be less than half the time; second, the addition of offenders convicted from outside of Canada as well; and thirdly, the addition of sex offenders pardoned under the Criminal Records Act prior to the proposed amendments, registered sex offenders who provide proof that they had received a pardon or were removed from the Ontario registry.

In essence, what we're doing is making technical changes that would align our existing law with that of the national government.

The proposed amendments to Christopher's Law are a continuation of our commitment to stronger and safer communities, which everyone wants to see occur wherever they may live in Ontario, and I look forward to the debate. I suspect that, like most of our bills here at Queen's Park, this bill will also go to committee, and there will be further conversation about this act at that time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I would only say that I returned promptly to respond to the member from Simcoe North, who takes the issue very seriously.

As he said, he works with the OPP and the police services very responsibly and respectfully. It's a very sensitive issue. He has briefed caucus on it and on Bill 163. I am anxious in seeing the general consensus develop in compliance with the federal record on the sex offender registry.

I think everyone here generally agrees with the objective. I have my own personal views on some sections, if I get a chance. I'm not sure that the pardon language, which is more federal, is appropriate. I have written to the federal minister on it. The evidence is very clear on the aspect of pardoning, which comes up in section 9.1 of the Criminal Code. It's scientifically proven, the recidivism and risk to the public. The fact that the people can get a pardon and then go about changing their name to avoid detection, whether here or—as we've seen in Canada—other countries, that remains a concern that I have.

But, generally, I think it's important to make sure the public is safe, and I think the government is doing the right thing in that respect. There are some other concerns, not directly on this bill, that I would raise to be constructive. There are those who would think that any suggestions or amendments would be not helpful, but I think there are reasons to raise those concerns, even if the government chooses to ignore them.

With that, I think the member from Simcoe North represents our views pretty strongly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This comes very close to home for me, and I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for his thoughtful intervention.

I worked with street kids. They were sexually and physically abused 80% of the time in their home. They would run to the streets, where I worked as an outreach worker. They were sexually exploited by adults, kids as young as 11 or 12 years old. I remember working on the streets and phoning into the police with their licence plate numbers.

I famously used the word "homophobe" the other day, and I said that what I was referring to was situations that I was seeing. I was referring to these people who came down with baseball bats and beat these children senseless, and police would not respond. And what's interesting is that these children, once they've been sexually abused and they're adults, often get placed by child and family services on offender registries. So the whole totality of this tragedy is that children who are sexually and physically abused at home run to the streets, are subject to all kinds of violence, often become chemically dependent to deal with their pain, they get involved with drugs, self-inflicted crimes, and end up getting involved in robbery and incarceration. And these children's lives are destroyed—I've foster-parented and raised a number of these children; I've seen them—by sexual exploiters.

I want to just agree with my friend from Simcoe North. I think he put this forward in a very passionate way. I think this is a very good law. I think it was one of the good things from the previous government.

But these are often motivated—and the horror, what was so shocking to me, is that more often than not, these were the parents. I raised children who had their legs broken when they were two years old, who went through 28 child and family placements. Some of these kids were gay and got the crap beaten out of them. Some of them were straight and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

The member for Simcoe North, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, the member from Durham and the member from Toronto Centre for all of their comments on my leadoff a few minutes ago.

I think it's nice that we get a variety of comments coming from our different members as we debate this legislation, and that's why it's always great to go to committee too, because we get the comments like those of the member from Toronto Centre, which I hadn't heard before or I wasn't familiar with. We have those kinds of comments that we can hear at the committee table, and we can ask people who are there to make presentations.

On this bill, though, I'll be amazed if we have any more than a day of hearings, and it's not that I'm going to say the government is going to push it through or anything like that. I just think that most of the police industry would be supportive of this. I know that the Ontario sex offender registry helped the government with

the legislation. It aligns itself with the national registry, and we may have some people come in and add comments. I'm looking forward to the member from Welland, who always has good suggestions and sometimes puts forward amendments to the legislation. We'll see what they have to say as well.

I think with that—I just said it—it's a bill we're proud of on this side of House. We think that it's the right thing to do by moving it in line with the national sex offender registry, and as I'm told, and I'm telling people—people in the OPP have told me this and some of the other major police services—our registry in Ontario is as good as any in the world, and it can be a model for other jurisdictions in the world a well. So the better we make it, the better it is for other jurisdictions, and of course, the better it is for the safety of our citizens and our young people as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: On behalf of New Democrats, I do want to make a few comments on this bill and some of the history which—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I want to give the member the opportunity. Are you doing the leadoff? Are you doing the NDP leadoff?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'll stand down the leadoff.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That you'd like to stand down the leadoff is what I'm getting at.

The third party would like to stand down their leadoff. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I would also like to outline some of the things which historically got us to where we are now and the introduction of this bill.

I think we know that there is federal legislation in this area and there is provincial legislation in this area. In fact, the federal legislation has recently been amended, in 2010. The federal legislation was amended by Bill S-2, which received royal assent on December 9, 2010, and when Bill S-2 is proclaimed at the federal level, there will be several differences between the federal registry and the Ontario registry. This is the reason why this bill is here today: because legislation needs to be put in place to, in effect, bring the two registries together. The changes being made are administrative in nature and will ensure that the federal and provincial sex offender registries are in sync with each other. I think we all know the changes that are being made as a result of Bill 163. It removes existing legislative offender reporting timelines of 15 days. It adds a new regulation-making authority to prescribe the timelines for reporting in section 3 and section 7 of the act. It requires offenders who have been convicted of a sex offence outside of Canada and who have been ordered to report to the national registry to also report to the Ontario registry. It allows the Ontario registry to maintain the records of registered offenders who receive a pardon under the Criminal Records Act.

1700

I think all of us would support these changes. They are, in essence, housekeeping changes that need to be made to ensure that the Ontario registry and the federal registry work in sync. But there continue to be two serious problems with the Ontario registry. One is the omission of convicted persons who were young offenders at the time of their conviction. What that means is that a person who was 17 and 11 months old and who was convicted of even a serious sex offence is immunized from being listed on the sex offender registry. I think most of us, if we were to think about that, contemplate it for a minute, would say there is a problem here.

The other element that remains of concern is the absence of retroactivity. We welcome the inclusion of persons convicted outside of the country, but the absence of retroactivity—and we all appreciate that over time retroactivity will become less of an issue, but it is certainly an issue now. This legislation is only 10 years old, and we have a chance to amend it here, but we are not dealing with the issue of retroactivity. What it means, then, is that there's a very large number of sex offenders in the community, in the country, in the province, who are not registered because their convictions occurred before the creation of the original sex offender registry. I think most Ontarians, if they knew this, would be shocked and would be concerned. We ought to be concerned. I'm hopeful that when this legislation goes before committee we'll have a chance to deal with those two particular issues.

Now, there are some other things that need to be addressed as well. The importance of discovering an offence and the importance of punishing an offence I think some of us all accept with respect to the criminal law. But I think we would all acknowledge that the prevention of the offence—in particular, the prevention of sexual assault—is really where we ought to put our greatest emphasis. The reality today, both in Ontario and in Canada, is that there is a crisis in overburdened prisons and that crisis is going to get worse. And there is a crisis when it comes to people receiving mental health services; I think we all acknowledge that that is getting worse. We know that there is a high percentage of sex offenders who have been abused themselves and we know that there is an absence of resources for people who unfortunately find themselves in this situation. So the question is, besides these essentially administrative amendments to the sex offender registry, what is being done to address the issue of prevention and what is being done to address the issue of those who have been the victims of sex offenders? What is being done to address those issues? What about the resources for young people who exhibit the early signs of a disorder or dangerous behaviour? What are we doing there? Are we doing anything?

In 2007, the Auditor General looked at Ontario's sex offender registry program. On page 272 of his report, this is what he said:

"Even though sex offender registries have existed for many years and can consume significant public resources, we found surprisingly little evidence that demonstrates their effectiveness in actually reducing sexual crimes or helping investigators solve them, and few

attempts to demonstrate such effectiveness. This has not gone unnoticed by critics of sex offender registries, some of whom argue that public funds would be better spent on offender treatment and support programs where there has been some documented proof of effectiveness in reducing recidivism"—"recidivism" meaning, of course, the committing of another crime by an offender after being released.

New Democrats fully support the sex offender registry. We understand why it exists; we understand the importance of having one. But we need to recognize that this is simply one tool in attempting to protect Ontarians, especially vulnerable Ontarians.

We need to do more. We need to focus resources on prevention. We need to focus resources on offenders and ensuring that they receive the counselling and the attention that will minimize the probability of them reoffending. We believe that by simply putting all of our resources into the sex offender registry and not putting resources into these other very important areas, we're letting people down.

New Democrats will be supporting the bill, but we want to see it go to committee, we want to see some stakeholder comment and we would like to see some resources put into prevention, on the one hand, and helping the victims of sex offenders, on the other hand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Kenora–Rainy River speaking on Bill 163 did make some very valid observations. I think that's what this second reading debate is all about.

The bill was just introduced on March 10, and we have briefly caucused it. Our critic, the member from Simcoe North, has just responded, and we're waiting. In fact, we all agreed to stand down. In the third party, the member from Welland, is the actual critic on this.

When we're discussing this bill, I think it's generally agreed in our caucus—Tim Hudak and Mr. Dunlop have told us that we should agree, but as you go through—I'm hoping to get a few moments; not too many, but a few on this issue.

The sex offender registry is well intended to make sure that people are aware that there could be a predator. It's that type of abuse that I'm talking about, where the person may be a risk to society, where we need to have some strengthening of the bill.

It differentiates between the person who may have been accused of inappropriately touching or those kinds of things that aren't acceptable, either—and they may even be convicted. Where there is violence or predatory kinds of activities, I don't think those persons should be eligible for a pardon.

It's a very subtle distinction. It is in the bill, which I will get to if I'm given a chance this afternoon. Perhaps the Liberal members will stand down their time so I will be given a chance to speak. But in the event they don't, I'm on the record.

It's a bit technical, because when there's a risk to society, we have a duty to protect the most vulnerable, and that's what this is about. I think we're all aiming in the right direction, and I look forward to further debate.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the comments of the member from Kenora–Rainy River and to speak in support of Bill 163.

It's interesting: I've been known to be very critical of things the former Conservative government did, but I will admit that this is something they did right. They did a very good job when they set up the Ontario sex offender registry.

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Enjoy it while I'm saying it. This doesn't happen often.

To be serious, the Auditor General looked at the Ontario sex offender registry and we did hearings at public accounts. The then OPP Commissioner, Fantino, came to talk to us. He talked about the fact that the Ontario sex offender registry is far superior to the national sex offender registry for a number of reasons.

Mr. David Zimmer: He's going to change that now.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I don't know what his position is now, but when he was commissioner of the OPP, that was certainly his position.

While there are some things we would like to see the national offender registry fix, they have fixed some things. Because they fixed those things, it's important that we align the Ontario sex offender registry to jibe with that registry.

Personally, one of the things I am very pleased to see is that we're adding sex offenders who have been pardoned. I was absolutely appalled, as were lots of Ontarians, when we realized earlier this year the frequency with which the federal government was pardoning people with sex offender histories. Now they're going to be captured both nationally and provincially on our sex offender registries.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want, in the time available, to add a couple of comments to the discussion today. Listening to the member from Kenora–Rainy River's comments reminded me of the important role so many organizations play in our communities.

I was particularly reminded of the work done by the York Region Abuse Program, which of course has been around for many years; I dare not mention a number, because I'm not sure I would be correct. It has provided opportunities for counselling and therapy for people—both children and adults—who have experienced the grimness of this whole issue of sex offenders.

I think that what we are debating here today, as recognized by members on all sides, is the fact that we have a good piece of legislation, and it has proven to be effective. What we need to do is refine it in such a way that it meets the standards nationally.

But it is an opportunity to recognize, first of all, the victims of sexual abuse and the work that is done by community organizations such as YRAP in trying to heal and being prepared to try to heal, whether it's very young children or adults who have struggled for many, many years and then realized that there is an opportunity, through organizations like YRAP and also Family Service Ontario, to find the kind of expertise that will, in some way, provide them with the methods and strength to go on and live as normal lives as they can. I think it's really important to keep them in mind as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I just want to take the opportunity, for a couple of minutes, to add a couple of comments on the proposed amendments to Christopher's Law in Bill 163. I think this is one of those pieces of legislation that, frankly, we agree in general is a good thing that we need to bring up to date because it is providing some results.

Just to touch on the proposed amendments, there are three areas. There's a reporting obligation, which enables the province to require sex offenders to report within seven days instead of the current 15. That's shortening that time gap. Once again, I think we all agree that it's a good amendment.

Addition of offenders convicted outside of Canada: I cannot name names or communities, but I know during my municipal days—

Mr. Jeff Leal: One of the greatest mayors Brighton ever had.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Close. Close.

But let me tell you, I had some calls from some of the ratepayers of the municipality of Brighton—as a matter of fact, it was in the Brighton township days, before the amalgamation, when I was reeve. People weren't quite sure, but they thought that there was a sex offender who moved into their community. There was no way they could verify it. I, as the mayor, called the police. They couldn't really share a lot of information, but it created an awful lot of anxiety, and this was in rural Ontario, where kids would have to walk to the school bus. So I think anything that we can do to improve the safety of those folks from—I'm going to use the word "predators" in some cases, although some of these folks might be somewhat reformed. I think we all need to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Kenora–Rainy River, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank my colleagues, both from the Conservative caucus and the Liberal caucus, for their comments. I just want to return, in the few brief moments that I have, to what I think is the most important part of this discussion that is not included in the amendment.

First, I think we all have to focus more attention on prevention, and insofar as this legislation can be amended to do something effective in terms of prevention, I would hope that that will happen at the committee level, and that whoever sits on committee will in fact spend some time looking at what can be done in terms of prevention.

The other issue is, again, treatment, and as the Auditor General remarks in his review, there have been treatment programs which have been shown to be effective, and effective in terms of reducing or eliminating the possibility of re-offending. I think in terms of protecting people from pain and suffering, in terms of offering better and greater security to the most vulnerable people in Ontario, we need to spend some time to reflect on this.

It is one thing to record the name, the identity, of a sex offender. It is quite another thing to ensure that people are not at risk of re-offending. It is quite another thing to be sure to ensure that vulnerable people are better protected.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services spoke the other day. He laid out the broader policy reasons for moving ahead with the legislation, and it falls to me now to get into some of the nuts and bolts and technical details of it.

The amendments that we're proposing to Christopher's Law are going to align the legislation with the national sex offender registry. That was amended by Bill S-2. Members of the House are aware that on April 4, 2000, the Ontario government passed Christopher's Law to establish and maintain a registry of sex offenders that the police can use proactively for investigative purposes and crime prevention.

The federal government established a national sex offender registry in 2004. The national registry was similar to Ontario's, though less comprehensive. On December 9, 2010, the federal government passed legislation, their Bill S-2, that brings the national registry more in line with Ontario's registry. However, a difficulty: The legislation will create some differences between the national and the provincial registries, and it's important that we resolve those differences.

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What are the differences? The sex offender registry is based on a very simple proposition, that is, if police know the whereabouts of all convicted sex offenders in the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and can better focus their investigation into actual crimes. That is why Christopher's Law requires offenders convicted of a criteria offence and residing in Ontario to register with their local police service within 15 days after a triggering event. A triggering event is typically the release from custody or if they've gone through a name change or an address change. It's important that that information be forthwith conveyed and put into the registry. Where there is no custodial sentence, they must register within 15 days after being convicted of a sex offence, or within 15 days of receiving an absolute or conditional discharge for a sex offence when found not criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder.

Currently in Ontario, police services are responsible for the Ontario and the national sex offender registra-

tions. But police services in Ontario only have direct access to the Ontario registry to input and search offender information. Because the information captured by the Ontario and the national registries is similar, police services in Ontario are only required to submit offender information into the Ontario registry. Information required by the national registry is automatically transmitted from the Ontario registry. However, the national registry will now require Ontario police services to collect additional information that cannot be entered into the Ontario registry because there is no legislative authority to do so. As a result, information that is automatically submitted to the national registry could be incomplete.

When S-2 is proclaimed—it has received proclamation but it hasn't been proclaimed yet—there will be some differences between the Ontario and the national registry in the following areas. Here are the differences:

Reporting obligations: Bill S-2 requires offender to register within seven days, while the Ontario legislation requires registration within 15 days.

A difference regarding offenders convicted outside of Canada: The federal registry will require registration of offenders convicted outside of Canada, while the Ontario legislation does not.

Pardon provisions: The national registry will maintain the records of registered offenders who receive a pardon under the Criminal Records Act. Information pertaining to all pardoned offenders must be removed from the Ontario registry—so you see the substantial difference there.

The federal legislation will also require the reporting of certain volunteer and employment information, while Christopher's Law does not now require this. The legislative amendments we are proposing would ensure consistency between the national and the provincial registry. Consistency is critical to the effectiveness of the registries, both the national registry and the provincial registry. It will help ensure that more offenders of interest are identified by an Ontario registry search during the time of these very sensitive investigations.

Having different Ontario and national registry reporting periods could increase the workload of Ontario police services. They would have to manually register offenders in Ontario for the national registry and then confirm that the offenders are fulfilling their national and their Ontario reporting obligations, if the registries were inconsistent.

The process of manual uploading of information from local police to the OPP, which in Ontario is the only police service with direct access to the national registry, and from the OPP then—the second step—to the national registry, could take up to four weeks. That's much too long for these time-sensitive investigations because when there's an investigation involving a sex offender, it makes common sense that the police want to move quickly. They want to move quickly; that's key to preventing further sex offences and to rescuing someone who is in danger. So this bill will ensure that Ontario continues to provide offender information to the national registry electronically and in real time.

Furthermore, where there are differences in the time allowed for offenders to report to the Ontario registry and the national registry, offenders may fail to differentiate the Ontario and the national reporting requirements, resulting in potential criminal charges for offenders who mistakenly believe they have 15 days to report to the national registry. We want to be fair and objective in describing and making known the requirements to people who have to and should register.

Including sex offenders in the Ontario registry who have been convicted of a sex offence outside of Canada will help ensure more offenders of interest are identified by the Ontario registry.

The bill proposes to address these issues that I've just touched on in the following way. I'm going to talk about some of the provisions of the bill now, and some of this gets pretty technical, but it's important, dealing with this matter of sex offender legislation, that we all know exactly what is contemplated in the bill.

Section 1 of the bill would add two new clauses to the definition "sex offence" in section 1 of the act. New clauses (b.2) and (b.3) would result in offences which were committed outside of Canada now being included in the definition if the person who committed the offence is required to report to the federal sex offender registry pursuant to an obligation under either section 490 of the Criminal Code or section 36 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

Section 2 of the bill would amend section 3 of the act to remove the 15-day reporting timelines and would provide for the timelines to be prescribed by regulation. The section would be further amended by adding two new clauses, (e.1) and (e.2), which would require offenders who are subject to a federal sex offender registry reporting obligation pursuant to the Criminal Code or pursuant to the International Transfer of Offenders Act to report to the Ontario registry within the time prescribed in the regulation.

Section 3 of the bill would amend section 7 of the act to remove the 15-day reporting timelines and to have the timelines prescribed by regulation. Section 3 of the bill also contains some transition provisions which would stipulate that if the events that trigger a reporting obligation in subsection 7(2) of the act occur before the bill comes into force, the old reporting obligation provisions would apply, and if such events occur on or after the bill comes into force, the new reporting obligations would apply.

Section 4 of the bill would amend section 8 of the act to state that it applies to persons who become subject to an obligation to report to the national sex offender registry pursuant to section 490 of the Criminal Code on or after the day this bill comes into force. It goes on to state that the duration of the reporting obligation under the act is for the duration of that federal reporting obligation.

Section 4 of the bill would further amend section 8 of the act to state that it applies to persons who become

subject to an obligation to report to the national sex offender registry pursuant to section 36 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act. They would have to do that on or before the bill comes into force. The section goes on to state that the duration of their reporting obligation under the act is for the duration of the federal reporting obligation.

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Section 5 of the bill would repeal subsection 9(3) of the act. Under that subsection, the ministry is required to remove all of an offender's information from the registry if the offender receives a pardon for all of the sex offences that triggered a reporting obligation. This is a very sensitive piece of the legislation. Section 6 of the bill would add a new section to the act, section 9.1, which would require the ministry to remove all of an offender's information from the registry if the offender receives a free pardon for all of the sex offences that triggered the original reporting obligation.

Section 7 of the bill would add a new regulation-making power to section 14 of the act, allowing for regulations to be made in relation to the various timelines for reporting set out in subsections (3) and (7) of the act.

I realize that that's a very technical speech with references to sections and subsections and a lot of technical language in my remarks, but in dealing with sex offender legislation, the sensitivity and the consequences for potential victims—because the whole idea is that you can keep an eye on sex offenders who might have a proclivity to repeat their conduct, to assist the police in investigating a sexual offence that has happened, and, of course, one of their tools is the registry where they can check on people who might be possible suspects.

The business of some people having had pardons in the past and that the information prior to those pardons should be included in the registry: That's all addressed in this bill. At the same time, we have to be cognizant and fair in dealing with the rights of a sex offender. They have rights too, and it's important that this legislation strike the right balance between their rights and protection of the public and assisting police officers in their investigation. It's my submission that this bill strikes the right balance. But I do want to leave you with these final points about the legislation, because it's very, very important.

Even with the proclamation of Bill S-2, Ontario's registry will still maintain the following advantages over the national registry.

—First, it is accessible by every police service in Ontario, where the national registry is only accessible by the OPP at their general headquarters in Orillia. As a result, what happens is that local police services in Ontario have got to contact the OPP to conduct a national registry search on their behalf.

—It allows the police to perform searches that display offender residences within a specific proximity of a given location, such as a school or a daycare centre. The national registry doesn't have that capability, and that's a real plus for the Ontario model.

—The Ontario registry maintains the historic and most recent photographs of the offender. The national registry only maintains the most recent photograph.

—Ontario's registry is routinely checked by police services in the course of their investigations. Ontario's sex offender registry has a compliance rate of more than 97%, one of the highest compliance rates for all sex offender registries in operation, including all of the registries in the United States.

Christopher's Law is an important piece of the legislation. It is based on a very simple proposition: If police know the whereabouts of all convicted sex offenders in the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and better able to focus their investigation on current offences.

The amendments proposed in the bill would, if adopted, maintain a smooth and efficient sharing of information between local police forces of both registries, the national and the Ontario, and more closely align the Ontario sex offender registry with the national registry.

It is for these reasons that I urge all members to study the legislation carefully, compare it to the national registry and reflect on the enhancements that the Ontario registry provides. This legislation ensures that Ontario continues to be one of the leaders in Canada, in North America and, indeed, in the world in the drafting of sexual offender registry legislation.

It's so important that we have the national registry and the provincial registry work in tandem, that they be in sync. It would be a terrible, terrible thing if, because of legislative differences, different reporting requirements and other technical differences regarding the obligations of a sex offender to register—if they're slightly different or even quite a bit different between the national and the provincial registry, we don't want anybody to fall between the cracks and not be registered, if they should be registered. They can fall between the cracks, from the offender's point of view, perhaps quite innocently, just because he or she didn't understand the reporting requirements or confused the provincial and the federal requirements. Or it may be that an offender deliberately takes advantage of the conflicting reporting requirements and deliberately navigates away through the cracks because of the differences in the legislation.

We owe it to all of the potential victims who are out there to provide the police with all the tools that we can possibly provide them. We owe it to our community, to our children, to our men and women who might, at some point in the future, fall victim to a sexual offence to set things up in such a way that we can do whatever we can to reduce the risk of a sexual offender repeating his or her conduct.

That's what this registry is all about. It's to provide protection of the public, it's to provide the tools to investigate offences that have already occurred and it's to eliminate the conflicts and the inconsistencies between the two registries so that the two registries act in tandem and the police have fast, quick and immediate access to the information in the registry.

Just this business of the legislation eliminating the requirement that the local municipal police forces in Ontario, under the current regime, have to go through the OPP and Ottawa, who then have to go through another process, call Ottawa and get the information back to the OPP office, and then send it out to the local municipal police, is a delay that often, we're told, can be a matter of days.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened very carefully to the member from Willowdale, and I think, to paraphrase, he explained that they have found the right balance. I would tend to agree with almost everything he says. I think we're all aiming at the same objective of having safe communities in the case of the sex offender registry.

When you look back at the history—and he was right to reflect on that, the compliance rate of 97%. This bill was introduced, I believe, by David Tsubouchi, who was then the Solicitor General, I gather; that was in 2000. This is an improvement to deliver compliance with the federal legislation under Bill S-2.

It's quite an innocuous little bill, actually. It's about a page-and-a-half long, and there's only one section. I think he spotted it. It's the new section, 9.1, which needs to have—and I've gathered there's going to be public hearings on this.

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It's more or less in the interest of our police services to sort out the accessibility issue. If you want to get to the national registry, you have to go through the OPP, which is kind of a red-tape bottleneck in this wired, flat world that we live in. In our local police station, you should be able to get access to these records. I say that with all the best of intentions to improve the bill, because it isn't as if we need to rely on paper records. These are all secured sites that should be available at the local police station.

I'll tell you why this is so important. When it comes to volunteers today or persons working with vulnerable people, they have to have background checks. This is becoming a serious, serious issue, while the intention is laudable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for Willowdale for his thoughtful and accurate description.

One of the things that's particularly difficult—and I'd just like to take a moment to look ahead. For about 15 years, I worked with sexually abused kids on the street. As I said earlier, 80% of those children were sexually abused at home by a family member, often a parent. We often have this CSI or Law and Order view that there is some terrible person in a trench coat in a local park, hunting down children. The sad story is that most of these children are abused by someone who loves them and protects them.

I also talked a little bit about the homophobia involved in that and how dangerous that is. I remember when I applied to be a foster parent, I had to fill out a 17-page questionnaire on homosexuality and child abuse, sexual abuse. I didn't mind that. I found out that I was the only person—because I was the first gay person in Canada to become a parent—no other parent or caregiver applying had to get that kind of review. I found that with all the children whom I was fostering and working with, the majority of them were sexually abused while in child care. I'm going to say that again: The majority of children whom I worked with on the street were not only abused at home, but abused by a caregiver and a guardian.

I got the questionnaire because I was gay, and I was the only one. Why don't we do it with straight people? Because the kids would tell me that if it was a nice, middle-class family in the suburbs, no one checked their record. No one found out if it was that hockey coach who had abused seven kids. The problem we have is that, in spite of this law, we never find out. They never appear on the registry.

Children don't report their parents. I had a grandmother come into my constituency office to tell me she thought her son was abusing her grandchild. I had to work with her for three weeks to help her get the courage to report it to the police. I've heard a lot of talk—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It's so encouraging that some issues do come forward that allow this House to set all the politics aside, park them at the door and work together to strengthen some of the rules that our society lives by. This is, of course, one of the most important, and that is to protect one of the most vulnerable parts of our society: our children. So I am happy to support this bill.

I am also very encouraged that the original Christopher's Law was introduced by a PC former member, David Tsubouchi, and created the Ontario sex offender registry, which still remains the only provincial sex offender registry in Canada. It's so appropriate that we now align it with the federal registry to try to create more security and less risk for our children.

I agree that we can go much further, but I think that in cases like this, unfortunately, it's sometimes one baby step at a time. I think that we can do much better. I know that my colleague from Oshawa has presented a private member's bill trying to create more awareness and necessity for people to be checked for minor sports teams. Unfortunately, that was voted down a couple of times in my time here. I think that we need to move forward more on issues like that. So I am pleased to be supporting this bill and hope that we can create even stronger laws.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm glad to hear both sides of the House supporting this bill, because it's very important to all of us to create some kind of protection mechanism for the kids and for our communities across the province of Ontario.

Of course, this bill is very technical. I listened to the member from Willowdale. He outlined exactly what this bill is all about. It is about creating protection, aligning our bill in the province of Ontario with the federal bill, to have some kind of coordination between the convicted in the province of Ontario with the rest of the nation, and also to have shared information to allow the policing system, with the RCMP or OPP or the police services, to work together to get the information they need in order to protect our communities.

I know that we in Ontario have had a strong bill for many, many years. It was the first one in the whole nation, maybe one of the most unique bills in North America and the strongest bill in North America. Now we are going to work with the federal government to have shared information, to align ourselves with the federal laws, because it's important for us, even though our bill in the province of Ontario is stronger than the federal laws.

I want to congratulate my colleague the PA for the Attorney General for bringing up to the House a lot of explanations and detailing in order to convince us and tell us what this bill entails, what the bill is all about. I'm glad. Hopefully I'll get a chance to speak more about this bill in the future, because I think it's very important to all of us. It's important to our constituents, important for the safety of the province of Ontario, to keep our province safe. As we know, the compliance on this bill, as a number of colleagues mentioned, is almost 97%—the highest in North America. So I'm going to support it. I want to congratulate my colleague who spoke on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Willowdale, you have to two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: I thank the members of the chamber for their remarks and for their careful attention to the debate. You know, at the end of the day what this bill is all about is bringing the Ontario registry into sync with the national registry, and as I've said before, the reasons for doing that are several.

First, we want to make sure that nobody, either intentionally or unintentionally, slips between the cracks and is not registered when they should be registered. Second, we want to provide the investigating police forces throughout Ontario—whether it's the OPP, whether it's the large police forces in Ottawa, Toronto, London, Windsor, Hamilton, or whether it's the smaller municipal, town and village police forces, because the citizens in big-city Ontario and the citizens in rural Ontario and the citizens in small-town Ontario should all have the benefit of a coordinated national and provincial registry.

We hear from time to time of horrific offences that occur in big-city Ontario; just as equally, we hear of horrific offences that occur in rural Ontario or small-town Ontario. The Ontario public is entitled to the best protection that that we can give them. Coordinating our two registries, eliminating the inconsistencies, making sure that there are no cracks that people—as I've said earlier, intentionally or unintentionally—can fall through is one of the best ways to protect against sexual offences.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I wouldn't want to have to interrupt my honourable colleague from Durham if he were in full flight, and when it gets near 6 of the clock, my trusty watch starts to vibrate, so I think it's time that we adjourn until 9 of the clock, Thursday, March 24.

The House adjourned at 1750.

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Thursday 24 March 2011

Jeudi 24 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just by way of getting into this debate, a couple of things I'd like to say are, first, I came out of the United Steelworkers organization. One of the things that I did when I was with the Steelworkers, along with Moe Sheppard and Omer Séguin, was a lot of work to deal with trying to find out why miners who worked underground had lung cancer and cancer of the trachea. We suspected, at the time, and we ended up proving, that in fact it was because of the environment underground.

You might wonder: What does that have to do with the relevance of this debate? I think it will illustrate the point of why I think what the government is trying to do here might be headed in the right direction but could end up taking one heck of a wrong turn, depending on what a minister would do with the powers that they have under the act.

Let me just tell you this story. Way back in the day, miners who went underground were constantly exposed to various types of carcinogens. We found, over the years, that many of the miners in, as we called it then, the Timmins gold camp, the Kirkland Lake gold camp and Red Lake and others, were getting what was called silicosis, which is a disease where the dust from underground accumulated in the lung. People contracted what was called silicosis and eventually died of not being able to breathe.

In a lot of cases, it also became a question of lung cancer. The lung cancer was not just because of the dust, but more because of the fumes underground, the introduction of diesel and various blasting agents that were used underground that were carcinogenic. Depending on the person's tolerance, because we know that no two people are affected by what's in the environment the same way, people contracted cancer and died.

That's how I got involved with this. Quite frankly, I got into politics as a result of the study that we did under the Steelworkers, headed then by Omer Séguin, who was our regional rep down in Sudbury, and Moses Sheppard, probably one of the most dogged people when it came to health and safety in this province and when it came to the issue of industrial disease. I became involved with those two characters, as I like to call them, and we started a study to take a look at what had happened to those workers who worked underground.

The reason the Steelworkers and my local, Local 4440 in Timmins—at the time, Noranda mine locals—did this was, we were quite convinced that there were a lot of people who had been diseased and had died as a result of exposure. But here was the nub: The medical community, the Ministry of Labour, the Workers' Compensation Board and others all said no it had nothing to do with the work underground; it had everything to do with their own lifestyles. They smoked too much or they were predisposed to cancer because of family genes, etc., etc. It had nothing to do with the work underground.

The problem we had was that there was really no mechanism within either the Workers' Compensation Board or the Ministry of Labour to deal with having somebody take a look at this from an independent perspective—who didn't have a vested interest, either as a worker or as a mine owner—and say, "All right, let's take a look at what's going on underground. Are people dying basically as a result of exposure to the dust and fumes underground, or are they dying because of other reasons?" We had asked at the time that some sort of independent review be done, and of course no such thing existed.

So we decided that the best thing to do was for us to start poking around ourselves. Moe Sheppard and I in Timmins and Omer in Sudbury started going through all

the old mine records we had—seniority lists from the various mines in the Timmins and Kirkland Lake area. We took that, and it took me probably the better part of two years on a Tandy 1000, one of the first computers to come out—at that time it was dBASE III—to input all the information we had for miners who had worked in the various gold mines in Timmins, because we had the seniority lists as a union. So we knew, dating back to about the 1920s, who had worked at what mines, because we had all the seniority lists for all the mines in the Timmins area and pretty much all the mines in the Kirkland Lake area, except one. We had those seniority lists, so we were able to track miners from one mine to the other. If they worked someplace for five years and popped up somewhere else three years later, we would know that.

We then said, "Well, that only gives us sort of a database of who was there." So we started deciding we should go through our compensation records at the union hall. Moe Sheppard would bring records home every day, and Omer Séguin did the same. They would read through the workers' compensation files on which we had represented workers on various things, from a broken ankle to an industrial disease. Everything that had anything to do with a pulmonary issue was circled and given to me to input into the computer.

So I would get the files from Moe the next day—I would pick up my 5, 10, 15 files that he had gone through—and I would have to go through, page by page, where he had circled things and try to organize it in the database so we knew, "Okay, this guy complained of a lung issue or this person had a problem with his throat," or whatever it was. We'd put that all into the computer.

The problem we now had was that we had enough information to tell us that we had miners who were sick. So we went to the Ministry of Labour and to the Workers' Compensation Board and we said to both, "We need you to do an independent study." Eventually they heeded. They didn't give us an independent study. They hired—I believe it was a Dr. Muller they hired to go out and do some work as an epidemiologist, to take a look at what had happened to these miners.

Dr. Muller, a learned guy—just like Mr. Ritter, who was appointed by the Minister of Natural Resources for the Agent Orange issue—basically went out and did his study. Of course, he came back and said, "It's all lifestyle. There was nothing underground that could ever cause these men to be sick." The expert Dr. Muller came back and said there was no causal relationship between the person's lung cancer, stomach cancer or trachea cancer and the work.

Well, we knew that was hogwash, because we knew anecdotally, if we talked to the families of dead and diseased miners, that the brothers who didn't work in the gold mines didn't have the same diseases. We just knew that if the guy who worked underground had lung cancer and had three brothers on the surface and they were all smokers as well and didn't have lung cancer, it couldn't just be a coincidence that lung cancer only happened to workers in the mining industry for no reason. It had to be because of exposure.

We went back and started making the point, and we then pushed, through Elie Martel, who was our health and safety person here in the Legislature—and we should thank Elie Martel and Bob Mackenzie, who came before us. They were in the forefront of creating what eventually became the Workers Health and Safety Centre and the Industrial Disease Standards Panel and other agencies that, quite frankly, led to some very, very big innovative changes when it comes to health and safety in this province. I'm proud to be a member of the party that had these gentlemen doing this work before, and I stand on their shoulders, along with everybody else in this Legislature, when it comes to those issues.

The point was, there was no independent person we could go to who would be able to do the study. They said, "Not a problem. We'll do a commission," I think it was the Ham commission, if I remember correctly, that was appointed then by the Minister of Labour—I think Mr. Sorbara was Minister of Labour at the time. The Ham commission went out and did its work. They did the study, and they did interviews and looked at our data and came back and said, "No, there's no casual relationship between the workers underground and their cancers." Well, we knew that was hogwash.

0910

My point is, we didn't have anywhere to go where we had somebody with true independence, who was not having their strings pulled by the minister, the government, the Workers' Compensation Board, the companies—or the unions, for that fact. We really had nobody independent to look at any of this.

So Moe Sheppard—and I give him great credit for this—says, "You know what we have to do? We have to go to the graveyards." We went to every graveyard in Timmins and Kirkland Lake and we pulled the names off the tombstones. We did that for a reason: Because we now had in the database all of the men who had worked underground because of the seniority lists; all of the information because of workers' compensation files; and now we had a date of birth and a date of death, so we were able to figure out, with a lot of the records, who was still alive and who was not. It allowed us then to go and start talking to those people who were still living, or survivors of those who had died.

The Steelworkers created a fund, for which I was hired to go on staff—that's how I ended up on staff with the Steelworkers—to go and interview all of these survivors, either the widows or the survivors of cancer themselves. What we found was quite fascinating. We did our own crude little epidemiology study. We had a questionnaire we did. We'd go in and say, "Hi, Mrs. Aavasalmi"—I always remember the name, because it was the first name on the list of the database. We would go and see Mrs. Aavasalmi, and she said, "Yes, my husband died; he's deceased. This is what happened." And we'd say, "Okay, did he have any brothers and sisters?" "Yes." And we did a whole history on the brothers and the sisters. We did

that with every survivor that we could find: either the widow, the children of the deceased miner, or the miner, if they were still alive.

When we finished that—it took about a year—we pulled it all together on the database—dBase III; man, that was fun back then, trying to work with that brute. Anyway, we got that information and, lo and behold, what did it say? It said that workers who worked underground died—what was it? Miners died 14.1 years faster than their non-mining brothers. So we looked at all the non-miners and said, "What happened to them, with their work histories? When did they live? When were they born? When did they die?" and the story was, on average, the miner died 14.1 years quicker than their non-mining brother. So we knew then we had something.

We then helped organize what was called the Victims of Mining Environment. These were the widows. Mrs. Ouimette, I always remember, and Mrs. Larcher, who were the big kingpins of this organization, organized like you would never believe before. Women in their 60s and 70s and 80s were getting organized and trying to find some way to basically bring light to this issue, to force the government of the day to do something, which at the time was the Peterson government. They came down here to Queen's Park, I'll always remember, on the bus.

They had made up mock tombstones, and put the mock tombstones in front of the Legislature: date of birth, date of death and what Charlie's name was, the miner who had died. The media would go out there and say, "What's this all about?" Then they started telling their stories.

Eventually, the media started saying, "There's something wrong here." They kept on calling—"There needs to be an independent review of this whole thing. We can't have the mining companies on the one hand, and the unions on the other hand, butting heads and a government in between that doesn't want to do anything."

What came out of that was quite interesting. We ended up creating the Industrial Disease Standards Panel, which was a truly independent agency that was able to look at issues such as cancer among gold miners. They were appointed, yes, by the government. A selection was made based on consultation with labour and the employers, and the person, once appointed, was independent. That independent body went out and did a whole bunch of work, when it came to what we eventually called the lung cancer gold miners' policy, that basically allowed compensation to be paid to those workers who were diseased as a result of their time underground. We paid out—I can't remember what the numbers were, but it was in the hundreds of millions of dollars of compensation that was paid to the families of those people who had died as a result of working underground—all of that because we questioned the authority and we questioned the government of the day. All of the experts were saying we didn't know what the heck we were talking about, and it took three dumb Steelworkers, as I always say, the three wise men—Omer, myself and Moe—to put the picture together so that eventually they could not refute the evidence.

I say that in this debate because I look at what we're about to do here, and it seems to me that we're taking some steps back in what the government is trying to create. They're saying they want to have a—what do they call it again? The person that they want to create—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Chief prevention officer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Chief prevention officer—thank you very much. I don't have my glasses on, so I never read notes or anything—which, in itself, is not a bad idea. The idea of having a chief prevention officer to look at these issues of industrial disease and how to make the workplace safer makes some sense. But the kicker is, this person was going to be responding to the Minister of Labour.

All I know is that I went through the process and it took us four or five years of work to try to convince the government to do something, and the problem that we had was, there was nobody out there who was able to say, "We're doing this, not as a vested interest from the workers' point of view or from the employers' point of view; we're doing this from a scientific point of view and what's right and wrong."

Eventually, we created, as I said, the Industrial Disease Standards Panel, the occupational health and safety centres and others, which are truly independent and are able to do the work they do and, as a result, we've cleaned up the underground. Working underground today has far less risk when it comes to industrial diseases, let alone accidents, because of the work that was done through these independent organizations, the occupational health and safety centres and, also, the Industrial Disease Standards Panel, which was eventually cancelled and shut down by the Conservatives when they came to power.

Here we are. The government is saying, now that we have these agencies, such as the occupational health and safety centres, "Well, that's not a bad thing, but we're going to make it all answer to the Minister of Labour." I'm saying that then there's no independence. Health and safety in this province are going to be driven by the minister. We all know that ministers of different types and different parties are going to have different focuses when it comes to health and safety. I would argue that the Conservatives would be on one side of the extreme and the New Democrats would be on the other side of the extreme. We believe that workers need to have the right to refuse, workers need to have the ability to know there will be no reprisals if they refuse work, and that health and safety inspectors need to have the powers to do the things they need to do to make the workplace safe.

What you could end up with in this legislation is a person who's appointed by the Minister of Labour who is not progressive, who doesn't want to see health and safety as a serious issue in the workplace, and we may end up very well taking some huge steps backwards when it comes to health and safety in this province. I, quite frankly, am quite disturbed by that.

As I started to read this legislation and looked at what it is and the way that it's structured, I said, "Yes, I'm

prepared to give the government some credit. They're trying to do something that, generally, is a good idea, as far as having"—what do they call them again, Rosie?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Chief prevention officer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —"chief prevention officers and the panel." I think that makes some sense. But that person is not going to be a person who's independent.

I would say that we can't allow the bill, in its present form, to go forward. I'm going to vote against it. My colleagues, I imagine, will do the same, but I'll let them pronounce themselves on that. I believe that if we do this, we need to find some way to make that officer independent.

Here are a couple of ideas. We could make it an appointment of this House, just as we do with the Environmental Commissioner or the privacy commissioner, where the person is appointed by the three parties and we need to agree among the three of us. Three representatives of each party get together, as we do to choose our officers of the House, and then that person is given a mandate of five or 10 years, whatever we decide, to do the job as required. That's one model.

The other model is to give this chief prevention officer the same powers under the act that, let's say, the chief medical officer of health would have. The difference is, the chief medical officer of health, yes, is appointed by the government but has powers that he or she must follow in the legislation, and the minister can't do anything about it unless he comes and changes the bill in the House. In other words, the chief medical officer of health has a certain amount of independence to do what's right and is not necessarily as influenceable when it comes to powers from the minister—the Minister of Health, in that case—to influence what his or her decisions would be about issues of public concern when it comes to health.

It seems to me that there are two models that the government can draw on. We can go the way of the chief-medical-officer-of-health example or we can go the way of the appointment through the House, such as an Ombudsman or one of those particular officers. I think that way, both the employer community and the worker community will know that there's some independence to this. At the end of the day, I don't think everybody's going to be happy, but that isn't the point. The point is, you need to have somebody come in who's independent and looks at all of this stuff and has some credibility and is able to do the kinds of things that they have to do.

0920

I just want to finish on this point. I give the government some credit for trying to do something that could be positive. I very much fear, however, that what they have done by setting it up the way they have—that the chief prevention officer and the panel are going to report directly to the minister and take their marching orders from the minister—is a step in the wrong direction. It's actually a weakening of what we do now. For example, the Workers Health and Safety Centre at least is hired by the Workers' Compensation Board. There's a buffer between the minister's office and the Workers Health and Safety Centre and other such agencies.

I just say again to the government: I will be voting against this on the basis that I truly believe that this is a step backwards, not a step forward. If we're serious about having a chief prevention officer, which I think is a good idea, we then need to make sure that that person is truly independent and has powers that are clear through the act, so that the minister, the cabinet or the Premier can't interfere with the important work that this person would have to do when it comes to making sure that our workplaces are safe and the workers are protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I really enjoyed the presentation from the member from Timmins–James Bay. I agree with him. We do have problems. We see many of them in the workplace. I have my own personal experiences with my father. He didn't even have a union to go to when he worked in the lumberyard, and he had problems there.

The key to the bill is that it's based on the Tony Dean report. It was actually an expert panel that reviewed and decided how to make workplaces safer. They came up with the idea. People in the ministry came forward, and this bill was drafted. It's founded upon the Tony Dean report. None of us would question Tony Dean's credentials.

In the Dean report, there is a recommendation for a chief prevention officer and a prevention panel. The panel will recommend to the officer every year what should be done regarding occupational health and safety. I think it's different than just having a bureaucrat write a report and give it to the minister every year, because the prevention officer has to take advice from the panel. On that panel are three employer representatives, three labour representatives, and other representatives who provide advice to the chief prevention officer.

So there are some viewpoints from different parts within the labour structure that will provide advice to the chief prevention officer, and that officer will provide annual reports. The minister will be accountable for anything that the panel or the officer recommends, because there has to be an annual report. I think that's very key. We've also integrated the system with this new thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to commend my colleague from Timmins–James Bay for the personal comments he has made and his concerns around this particular bill.

What we worry about is: To what extent do the health and safety associations, the Workers Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health centres for Ontario workers retain the independence that they have at the moment? It's not quite clear to me. They are independent at the moment. Will they retain their independence as they go forward, or will the minister override much of the opinions and the work that these people do? That remains a doubt in my mind.

The other question that is very clear and irrefutable—and that is that the chief prevention officer writes up his

or her report, but that report must be approved by the minister before it's released to the public. We worry about that, parliamentary assistant. We worry about that, because if the minister has the power to change that report, we think that could put undue influence on the kind of measures that the chief prevention officer would be bringing forth. So if that independence of the chief prevention officer is undermined, or potentially is undermined, or could be undermined, by your government or another government in the future, that puts into question much of the work that you're trying to do and much of the work that everybody has tried to bring forth in the report presented by Mr. Dean.

So we have serious concerns, I agree with the member from Timmins–James Bay. That's why we want debate; that's why we want hearings. We want to be able to hear from different people about these particular aspects of the bill before we pronounce ourselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened carefully to the member from Timmins–James Bay about his experience and his job on the mining front, where he described eloquently how people suffered in the mines, and the comparisons he made very, very well to compare people in the same family who work outside and inside, how people contract disease and people don't, as a result of working underground. It's important for all of us, to create some kind of safety mechanism.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Labour for bringing in some changes to the act and to the way we deal with labour and employees across the province of Ontario.

The creation of a prevention officer I think is very important, and also taking the responsibility from WSIB to labour, which means the government wants to take the full responsibility to protect our workers who work on a daily basis to provide for our economy and support our economy. I think all these mechanisms were put in place in order to create training and also create awareness among the workers to make sure that when they work in a bad environment, they have the right to report their employers, and also to create protection for them.

We believe strongly that our workers in the province of Ontario work very hard to build this province and also to continue to maintain our stability and our ability to continue to build a prosperous province. That's why I think we owe them great respect and we should create laws and regulations in order to protect them and make all the workplaces safe.

The member mentioned from his own experience how he worked hard with the steel union and the miners in the north in order to create those mechanisms to educate the government back then on how important it is to create a safe environment for the workers, especially the people who work 600 or 700 feet underground. I had that experience when I went to the salt mine—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I too spent over 30 years in heavy industry and am well aware of the things that are missing in health and safety.

Some of the things that are important to the NDP that are not being addressed sufficiently by this bill are—external enforcement is one. Enforcement must be based on the principle that the cost of non-compliance is greater than the cost of compliance. The internal enforcement provides certified members with the unilateral power to issue stop-work directions.

I could go on. There are several other items under each title, but I've only got two minutes here.

Enforce and strengthen the reprisal provisions on the OHSA. Give ministry inspectors the power to investigate alleged reprisals and to reinstate workers and order back pay and other damages to employees. Improve and expand health and safety training throughout Ontario. There are many workplaces in Ontario where they don't even have regular safety inspections; they don't have monthly tours. They don't follow up even after they've been ordered to do things, and five months later you find that at the same plant where a person was given an order, someone is either killed or injured seriously because they haven't followed up. That's another serious thing.

Increase health and safety support and resources to workers so they don't have to be worried about reprisals from their employer. A regular review of health and safety systems legislation and regulations is also important. These are just some of the things that we see are lacking in the bill.

In my humble opinion, I think they've given far too much power to the minister. He can override his commissioner and he can override independent health and safety organizations in this province. I think they've done a wonderful job in the last few years and they're an independent body that has no bias and no influence outside their own workplace. They can follow their directives and initiatives in the way they feel is correct for the people of Ontario. Certainly we have to look at all these things before we pass a bill like this.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Timmins–James Bay has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank members for responding.

The point I'm trying to make is that the idea that the government has brought forward in this legislation is not a bad idea. I don't think the whole idea should be shot down. However, I know from experience that I've gone through that if you don't have an independent person who is responsible for the investigation into issues around health and safety and recommendations as to what to do to make the workplace safer when it comes to freedom from accident or disease—if that person is not independent, we are in a heap of trouble.

I've worked in that type of environment. I worked in the gold mines up in Timmins in the 1970s and 1980s in that particular environment, and I can tell you that work-

ers struggled hard and long in order to get the minimal amount of independence that organizations such as the occupational health and safety centre and the clinics have now. They do immeasurable work when it comes to making sure that we try to prevent accidents.

I very much fear that the way this legislation is written now will turn the clock back to pre-1980s, to a time where workers, quite frankly, didn't have somebody they could go to that was truly independent in order to do the types of investigations that have to happen to make a workplace safe.

The bottom line here is, we need to ensure that workplaces in this province are as safe as possible. We need to make sure that people, when they go to work in the morning, are going to come back at the end of the day free from accident or disease. There are ways of being able to prevent the vast majority of accidents and disease if we're able to do the type of work that we've been doing up to now, but the key is, it must be an independent system that doesn't have a vested interest of the employer community, the worker community or the government. They have to go and do the job that needs to be done in order to make sure that workers are safe and workers are not put at risk of having diseases as a result of their exposure to the underground or any other workplace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there's been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. The debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government indicates otherwise.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: We would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The minister without portfolio has indicated that we'll continue the debate.

Further debate? The honourable member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much. I wasn't sure what was happening there. I don't think I've ever seen that happen in this place before.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He was so kind.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You're such a great guy, Gerry Phillips.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Because you wanted to hear me speak, right, Gerry? That's what it's all about.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: We live to hear you, Garfield.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you so much. I'm honoured that this is what happened. So you can hang in for the other folks here as well.

Anyhow, it's a pleasure to rise to second reading debate on Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters. I asked this morning to speak to this bill, and I wanted to put a few things on the record.

The explanatory note is something I always like to start with, at least. The bill amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act. That's the key reason we're here, because of some accidents two years ago.

"Section 4.1, which specifies the minister's responsibility for the administration of the act and sets out some of the minister's powers and duties in administering the act, is added to part II of the act.

"The act is amended to allow the minister to establish standards for training programs and to approve programs that meet the standards. The minister may also establish standards that a person must meet in order to become an approved training provider and may approve a person who meets the standards as a training provider with respect to one or more approved training programs and may collect information about workers' successful completion of approved training programs for the purpose of maintaining a record.

"Section 6 of the act is amended to authorize a director to establish policies respecting the interpretation, administration and enforcement of the act and to require an inspector to follow any such policy.

"Section 7.6, which allows the minister to establish training and other requirements that a member of a joint health and safety committee must fulfill in order to become a certified member, is added to the act. The minister may certify a committee member who meets the requirements.

"Section 8 of the act is amended to require a constructor or employer to ensure that health and safety representatives receive training to enable them to effectively exercise the powers and perform the duties of a representative.

"Section 9 of the act is amended to allow either co-chair of a joint health and safety committee to make written recommendations to a constructor or employer if the committee fails to reach consensus.

"The bill adds part II.1 (Prevention Council, Chief Prevention Officer and Designated Entities) to the act. Section 22.2 of the act requires the minister to establish a prevention council responsible for providing advice to the minister on the appointment of a chief prevention officer and providing advice to the chief prevention officer on occupational health and safety matters. Section 22.3 requires the minister to appoint a chief prevention officer responsible for developing a provincial occupational health and safety strategy, preparing an annual report on occupational health and safety and advising the minister on occupational health and safety matters. Sections 22.4 to 22.7 allow the minister to designate an entity as a safe workplace association or as a medical clinic or training centre specializing in occupational health and safety matters if the entity meets the standards established by the minister. A designated entity must operate in accordance with the standards and with any other requirements imposed on it, and is eligible for a grant from the ministry.

"Part III.1 of the act is amended to allow the minister to approve codes of practice with respect to both statutory and regulatory requirements and specify that compliance

with the code is deemed to be compliance with the requirement, subject to any terms or conditions set out by the minister in the approval.

"Section 50 of the act is amended to allow an inspector to refer a matter to the board where a worker alleges that his or her employer has violated the prohibition against reprisals and where circumstances warrant. The matter cannot have been dealt with by final and binding settlement by arbitration under a collective agreement or by the worker filing a complaint with the board, the worker must consent to the referral and a policy respecting referrals must have been established by a director before the inspector may refer the matter to the board.

"Section 50.1, which gives the Office of the Worker Adviser and the Office of the Employer Adviser prescribed functions for the purposes of part VI of the act, is added to the act.

"Section 63 of the act is amended so that persons employed in the Office of the Worker Adviser or the Office of the Employer Adviser are not compellable witnesses in a civil suit or any proceeding respecting any information or material furnished to or obtained, made or received by them under the act which acting within the scope of their employment.

"Subsection 70(2) of the act is amended to add complementary regulation-making authority.

"Provisions relating to the load-bearing capacity of structures are updated to remove references to an engineering design method that is no longer current.

"Other complementary and transitional amendments are made to the act."

There are small amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997:

"Part II (Injury and Disease Prevention) of the act is repealed. The substance of subsection 4(2) and section 10 of that part (dealing with payments to constructions workers and first aid requirements that may be set by the board) is re-enacted elsewhere in the act."

"Section 159 is amended to exempt information-sharing agreements between the board and the Ministry of Labour from the requirement that the agreement be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

I understand that the whole reason this legislation was brought forward was as a result of the fact that on Christmas Day 2009, four workers were killed and others grievously injured when the scaffolding supporting them collapsed. The workers were illegal immigrants, and the scaffolding had been improperly maintained. As a result, the government launched a panel, chaired by Tony Dean, the former secretary of cabinet, for whom, by the way, we all have a lot of respect. The blue ribbon panel consisted of academics, labour representatives and members of industry. After almost a year, the panel came back with a series of recommendations in December 2010, and this legislation, of course, enacts the panel's recommendations.

I guess the concern I had was—and I know there has been lots of debate, and to be perfectly honest, I haven't had a chance to look at all the other folks who have debated this. But when I first heard of this accident in 2009, on Christmas Day, I had a real problem with how it happened in the beginning. What I'm hearing—I've had a number of complaints from industry, the manufacturing industry in particular, who tell me that, over and over again, they're inundated with inspections from the Ministry of Labour and workers' compensation people. I'm curious how a factory in Simcoe county or Grey county can have monthly inspections—sometimes five and six reports coming to them from the Ministry of Labour—and they continually update these factories.

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If you've been in the factories—one company manufactures aerosol cans; another, plastic products; there's a cement block manufacturing company. These are people I've heard a number of concerns from, and one of the concerns they're always saying to me is, "We continually keep our products and our assembly lines up to code and these inspectors come in and make these minor changes on a regular basis," and it gets very expensive for them.

I'm wondering how somebody who can be dangling in the air on scaffolding on Christmas Day—maybe none of the inspectors are out and looking at job sites on Christmas Day or on holidays, and maybe they only work from 9 to 4 or something like that. I'm not sure of the exact details of that.

On one hand, we've got an over-inspection, and on the other hand, no one seems to be inspecting equipment that's outdated and has been improperly maintained. When was the last time an inspector looked at that scaffolding that was dangling in the air from the high-rise? It would be interesting to see some of the comments coming back. I'd like to sit in on the committee. I'd like to ask those questions at committee to the minister and to some of the people who will make deputations to the committee. How, on one hand, do we have so much time for inspections on some job sites and at other times, apparently, no one looks at them?

I keep a close eye. I'm from a construction background. I love to watch the construction sites here in the city where they build these huge high-rises. I can tell you that what I see on those sites is complete health and safety worked on to the best of their ability. You see everyone wearing hard hats; they've all got the colour-coded jackets they wear for identification. You see the guardrails put up everywhere around the cranes, around the edge of the construction site. I would say, overall, on those high-rises etc. that we see being constructed in the city, that they're doing an extremely good job of health and safety. The folks who are the contractors obviously are taking a great deal of pride in that. I think that by far the vast majority of the people working on those construction sites are doing a great job and are well protected.

However, when you hear of someone else in another part of the city dangling with a couple of ropes on unsafe scaffolding, you wonder why no one in the Ministry of Labour is going out and just keeping an eye on all of the high-rises that you see, especially when it comes to

window cleaning or any of the construction improvements that they have to make to the buildings. Who is keeping an eye on those? Obviously, no one was, and, as a result of that, four people lost their lives on Christmas Day 2009.

So these are the kinds of questions I'd like to raise on this. I understand there are also questions around the prevention officer. But we pay a lot of money, as taxpayers, into the Ministry of Labour and the WSIB, and as far as I'm concerned, there's enough money there now that these kinds of accidents should not be happening. To try to come up with another bureaucratic level or a whole new series of jobs and programs that are made to improve worker safety shouldn't require any more money. I think the money is in the system and they should be able to easily make the work system safer for the employees with the money that's already funded by the Ontario taxpayers into this ministry.

That's all I'll have to say today. I look forward to the remaining debate on this bill and also to the opportunity to debate it and to listen to the deputations in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments made by the member for Simcoe North. I think he's outlined in his presentation the complexity of the act in front of us today. What Bill 160 really does is amend two key acts. It amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act and it amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

The amendments are not that easy to understand, but these amendments came as a result of Tony Dean's report, which is actually called the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety. It was struck shortly after that accident. I'm not sure, but I think it was on December 24 that that unfortunate scaffolding accident took place. Shortly after that, the Minister of Labour requested Tony Dean to chair, or be in charge of this panel that would study workplaces and try to make them safer.

It came forward with a number of recommendations, I think 46 in all. Again, they did extensive consultations on their own and they came forward with a report. The Ministry of Labour was then able to bring forward a bill, and that bill is in front of us today with changes, as I mentioned, to the two bills so that workplaces will be safer.

What we want to do, and I think everyone in this House agrees, is to make workplaces safer. The bill in front of us attempts to do that and is based almost exclusively on the expert advisory panel's recommendations—at least some of them, if not all of them. The idea is to make workplaces safer and to prevent accidents like the scaffolding one from ever happening again in the future. It's the biggest overhaul of the act in 30 years. I think we're going in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm not quite sure I agree with the parliamentary assistant that the Dean report is mostly being followed. I think there are a lot of things that have been left out. One of the major concerns is section 50. The way it's currently administered discourages many workers from exercising their rights under the OHSA and does not adequately protect from reprisals those who do exercise their rights. The panel heard some key criticisms:

—MOL inspectors have no role in investigating reprisal allegations.

—The OLRB procedures are complex and take too long, and travelling to Toronto for a hearing is expensive and time-consuming.

—The MOL rarely prosecutes—I repeat: rarely prosecutes—employers for violating section 50.

The Dean report concluded this section with this recommendation: "The Ministry of Labour should enhance the current legislative provisions for penalties by adding administrative monetary penalties as an enforcement tool, and should develop policies and procedures that govern their use." That lacks in this bill, big time.

The NDP supports the use of administrative penalties which would allow an inspector to impose an immediate financial penalty on an employer. Ideally, we would have liked to have seen this in the following:

—Certain violations must result in mandatory penalties relying on a schedule of violations and penalties.

—Repeat violations resulting in higher penalties.

—Penalties must reflect the seriousness of the violation, how long the violation has been occurring, the number of workers affected and the impact on workers—injuries and illnesses.

Such a system would be speedy and not easily circumvented. Employers and other workplace parties would be aware of the cost of non-compliance with certain sections of this act. This is a very important part that is lacking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: As we all know, we're moving forward with the changes to our health and safety system that makes workplaces safer for all Ontarian workers. I spoke previously about my son having a summer job working on road repairs. I was very pleased that they were giving him the training as a youngster. I think it was very important. But every day that he went to work we would always say to him, "Make sure that you come home, and be safe and don't do anything that you don't know how, that you haven't been trained on."

I think it's very important. I'm pleased that, as we're making these changes, the education and training of workers and employers—of course, we all know it's crucial, in order to ensure that all our workers are safe, that employees have enhanced safety training and a more effective reprisal complaint process. If a worker sees that something is not right, it is their duty to stand up and say something without fear of reprisal.

I know that the member from Simcoe North spoke about the inspectors. I'm pleased that our government has put inspectors back into the system in all areas across a number of ministries that were cut previously. I think that

has helped to improve safety across the board in so many areas of this province.

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The fact that we're going to have a new chief prevention officer will be of benefit to all the workers in this province. I agree that we have to make sure that those inspections are done across the board and that the proper regulations are in place so that people will be able to know that when their loved ones go in to work in the morning or in the evening, they're going to come home again. It's crucial to the safety of our workers in this province. I know that, personally, I want to see all those people come home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to speak on behalf of Bill 160. I had the opportunity a couple of days ago to speak at greater length, but I'd like to commend the member from Simcoe North for some of the points that he covered.

Just to go over some of the points that I raised a couple of days ago: On this side of the House, we, the official opposition, strongly support the Dean report but we're not in favour of this bill as written. We think that it needs a lot of amendments and it needs a lot of work done at committee to improve it.

We think there are lots of improvements to make. It drastically deviates from the original Dean report, which we commended, as I say, because the Dean report did take a lot of time to look at the issues. I feel, and I think a number of other people have said this, that this bill, at the end of the day, will do nothing to prevent bad employers from entering the underground black market, where they would still be able to operate because it will probably drive more people underground with more of these regulations.

This is just another bureaucratic committee that would, I'm sure, lead to a number of patronage appointments that would do nothing to add to the safety of workers in this province.

This chief prevention officer would take over control of all occupational health and safety activities within the government and within the province. It would remove prevention activities from the former WSIB mandate, where they are now, and would upload them to the Ministry of Labour. It also authorizes the minister to license and set standards for training programs recommended by this chief prevention officer—another onerous load on small business and legitimate businesses that are trying to do business in this province. It will do nothing for the ones that are underground and the ones that will further go underground.

The Dean report had a lot of recommendations to the bill. Like I say, we strongly support the Dean report, but we feel that this bill needs a lot of improvement. The devil's in the details, as the old saying goes. It needs to get to committee as soon as possible. I'd recommend that that committee travel. Come to Sarnia–Lambton, where we have a great safety and prevention record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Simcoe North has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you to the members from Scarborough Southwest, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Sarnia–Lambton for their comments this morning.

No one wants to see anybody injured in the workplace in Ontario: That's a given. I think that's what everybody in this House would agree to. What I want to know and what I would like to ask at the committee is—because I don't think I've heard it here today, and I don't think the parliamentary assistant has answered or that I've heard it from any of the government members—how you're going to stop something like this from happening again.

This was created because someone went out in a holiday season. They had illegal immigrant workers. They had a scaffolding system that was set up that was unsafe and had not been properly maintained. I want to know how next Christmas, the same thing couldn't happen to somebody else. How is this bill going to stop something like that from happening? Because you can't legislate against someone who, I feel, could be doing something illegal; they probably set the timing up for that particular job so that they would not have to abide by workplace safety inspectors, because they knew they were probably off on the holiday season. I think that's probably what happened here.

I'd like someone to tell me how this legislation will actually stop that from occurring another time. We don't want to lose four more people in a tragic accident like that—just looking at it as not only a legislator, but as a common person looking at it from the outside, wanting to know what this legislation will do to stop it from happening again in a year or two, or whenever. The way I see it right now, there's nothing that will stop that from occurring again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We've had over seven hours of debate. We'll now go into 10-minute debate rotations.

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to speak to Bill 160, and I want to talk about some personal experiences. Everybody has a personal experience, which I think is useful to share with everyone.

My father was a construction worker, and two of my brothers were carpenters—two of us became teachers—and like most immigrants, my father and my two brothers worked very hard in carpentry and in the construction area. Part of that experience reveals many problems, because I recall my brothers and my father talking about how difficult it was in the workplace and how frightened they were to admit that they might have been injured or that they might have a physical problem that could prevent them from working. They were afraid that if they weren't able to work, to whatever degree, they would be let go, and/or if they got injured, there was no recourse to them.

That story is very typical of a lot of immigrant groups. It wasn't considered manly to report an injury. They were

afraid, as I said, that if they reported the injury, they would be fired. Many who reported an injury would be paid by the employer and were told they shouldn't report it to the then Workers' Compensation Board, because, of course, if they did, that would hike up their costs, because the more injuries you have, the more you had to pay.

Imagine a worker not reporting a potentially long-lasting problem that they might continue to have for a lifetime. Not reporting it means that it's not on the record. Not reporting it means that if there were no witnesses, you would never be able to prove that you ever had the injury. These were the stories of the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s, and it still goes on, I suspect. There's nothing new under the sun, as it relates to injuries.

We sometimes don't respect workers. We oftentimes don't respect injuries. I think about how we, as a society, respect firefighters when they die in the workplace—as we should, correctly. I often think of the tremendous societal grief that there is when a policeman or policewoman dies on the job or gets killed. The whole of society rallies to the families in grief. For some bizarre reason, we don't do the same when an injured worker dies. We feel bad. We feel sorry. A day or two later, the injury and the death is gone, and the families suffer it on their own. Why is it that that happens? Why is it that there is no public collective grief for the injured workers? I find that a bit of a problem, and I wanted to share that with the members of this Legislature and whoever might be watching this bright, early morning.

I want to say that I support many aspects of Bill 160, and I have some criticism, which I'll share with you straightaway.

One of the things this bill does is to eliminate some of the fragmentation that exists in health and safety. You've got a Workplace Safety Insurance Board that deals with some aspects and you've got the Ministry of Labour dealing with others, so the argument for many years has been that the system with health and safety is fragmented. This finally brings the two together. It's a good thing. Prevention and enforcement are finally brought under one roof, and we think that, too, is a very useful thing to do. The Ministry of Labour sets the standards to protect worker health and safety, and we believe that is correct and that's a healthy thing to be doing. But there are some concerns, and my colleague from Timmins–James Bay spoke to this earlier. Some of this concern relates to the independence of many of the groups that dealt with health and safety, the independence they used to have and which could be under threat under the new bill.

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Health and safety associations had independence to present their work. The Workers Health and Safety Centre had their independence to do the work around health and safety, and we felt that that was the right thing to have. The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers did very much the same. We worry that their independence is questioned, is potentially undermined under the new system, and we want to make sure and we want to have assurances from the parliamentary assistant, the minister and this government that that indeed will not be the case.

But assurances in and of themselves may not be enough; we need to see them in law. Because when we look to the chief prevention officer, we note that his or her report must be approved by the minister before it's released to the public. That is a fact. That fact undermines the individual's independence to present a report on health and safety in whatever way he or she believes it ought to be presented. But having to have the minister look at the report, have his or her oversight, have his or her override over that report, questions the independence of the chief prevention officer.

The parliamentary assistant doesn't speak to that. He keeps on saying how Mr. Dean has presented this report, and it's a presentation that he, Mr. Dean, makes on behalf of all of the consultations he has made, but he never speaks to the issue that I have just raised. He avoids it, and the parliamentary assistant avoids it because he knows that the independence of the chief prevention officer is under threat; it's questioned. That's why he doesn't want to speak to it. That's why his minister will avoid speaking to that issue and the government will avoid talking to that particular issue.

The Conservative Party, as presented by the member from Lanark, Frontenac and others, says that they oppose the way the prevention council is structured because it is the minister who decides who he or she will have on that prevention council. According to the member from Lanark, Frontenac and others, the problem with that is that what will happen is you will have a whole lot of Liberal appointees to that board. As a result, he argued, this puts into question the entire work of the prevention council.

I argue, in a contrary position, that if you have the Conservative Party in government and they are hostile to this prevention council or to prevention in general, that presents a similar problemo, in my humble estimation of things. It could be that you could have a Conservative minister who might be friendly toward injured workers. God bless. It could very well be.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. And it could very well be that you might have a friendly Conservative government vis-à-vis injured workers; it could very well be. But if they happen to be hostile, they would present the same problem that the Liberals are presenting by way of how they are structuring this particular council.

So we worry about the independence of the prevention council, and we worry about the lack of independence of the chief prevention officer. We have profound questions that we need to address in committee hearings, and we hope to be able to hear them before we declare ourselves on this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: During my early days and my first jobs as a graduate engineer, I was involved in the con-

struction industry in Ottawa. There were two construction failures there that caused death, and I remember them to this day. They both involved, in the shoring, falsework failures during concrete-placing operations. One was the Heron Road Bridge—I think it was seven or nine people who were killed in that accident—and a building on Elgin Street. They came within one or two years of each other.

I attended the coroner's inquest on the building failure and it was quite traumatic for me, as a young engineer, to hear the evidence come out on how the failure occurred, and knowing, from the coroner's recommendations, that it would have been preventable if certain things had been done.

I think it's important that we've moved ahead as a government. One of the first things we did was hire more inspectors. The present Attorney General said, when he was the Minister of Labour, that there were a billion reasons to have better safety on our construction projects.

I think that's the direction we've been going in, and this, the Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 160, takes us again in that direction of more safety in the workplace, trying to make sure that there are fewer areas that are not going to be looked at. Where accidents have, in the past, been occurring, we can block those.

I'm very much in favour of what we're doing with the chief prevention officer. We'll be able to coordinate the prevention system. That's going to bring it all together under one person, and we'll have a say for Ontario's construction workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Trinity–Spadina is always passionate and often informative. This bill, as he has said, and anything that we do to improve workers' safety, for them and their families, is very important. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear to us that that is why this bill is a worthy discussion.

Here's the real issue: Those Ministry of Labour investigators that were just mentioned by the previous speaker already had the authority and, indeed, the responsibility, to inspect that site. I think this bill is more or less a broader response to workplace safety, and more importantly, it's looking at the WSIB.

One of the features of this bill is that it uploads the responsibilities for prevention to this new office, the chief prevention officer. It takes it out of the responsibility of the WSIB, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The WSIB is off the rails; we know that now. Their operating deficit is around $11 billion. It is a mess, and the Auditor General said that as well. That money is actually paid by employers, not the government; they haven't got one nickel in this.

On the enforcement side, they do. What is so shameful is that this accident could have been prevented by the existing structure. This bill will not change that. In fact, there's no argument here that it may not improve the underground economy, which some could argue was the case of these four workers in 2009, being new to Canada and maybe being taken advantage of.

We want to protect safety in the workplace. It is the right thing to do. This bill is probably a bit overboard and excusing the government for not doing the job they were supposed to do back in 2009.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would argue with the last part. I don't think this bill is a little bit too much overboard. I think, quite frankly, what you're going to end up with is all of those independent agencies that currently exist put in a position where the minister is going to have a whole bunch of ability to direct what happens with those agencies. I don't think that's a good thing. I don't think that you, as a legislator, or I, as a legislator, or they, whoever the government is, should have the right to muck around with what is supposed to be truly an independent agency. That, to me, is the crux of the issue.

The idea of having a—what do they call it, Rosario?

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: A chief prevention officer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Chief prevention officer; jeez, I keep on forgetting it in the debate.

Anyway, the idea is not a bad one, but you really have to have that person be independent. I suggest that there are a couple of ways to come at it. We could do similar to what we have with the chief medical officer of health, where there's legislation that sets out the powers of the chief medical officer of health and there is a form of independence. Yes, that person is appointed by cabinet, but there's a form of independence through the law. So it's not as if that person answers directly to the minister. They do, but there are some safeguards within the law.

I think the best thing to do is a similar type of thing to what we do with the Ombudsman or with the privacy commissioner, whoever: The three parties get together, they put a person each on the committee, we agree who that person is for a five- or 10-year term, and that person reports to the House. In that way, you can truly have an independent system. I think that's where we need to be going, because I know from my experiences, and I think you know, as a worker—and I know Mr. O'Toole worked a long time in the automotive industry—that health and safety is something that is truly important to the bottom line, because the fewer accidents we have, the better it is for the companies and certainly the better it is for the workers. To do that, I think we need to have a system that's truly independent from government and can't be influenced by the minister of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to stand up and speak and listen to the member from Trinity–Spadina speaking about this bill.

This is all about the democratic process. That's why we introduced the bill and the opposition voiced their concern and added to the debate and advised us about different issues. We sent the bill to committee, and the

committee enhanced the bill and gave it more ability. That's what democracy is all about.

I listened to the member speaking, and while he's criticizing some, in the end the chief prevention officer is not going to work alone. He's going to have a council built from workers and also owners and experts in safety, in order to advise the chief. Those mechanisms are in place to protect the workers and create a safety mechanism for all of us in the province of Ontario.

In the end, the suggestion here is to enhance safe working conditions and make sure that all the workers in Ontario, all the employees in Ontario, work in a safe environment, and whoever violates those safe environments is going to be punished. That's why the chief prevention officer is going to work hand in hand with the employers, with the workers, with the experts, to create those conditions.

Also, moving the responsibility from the WSIB to the minister shows our commitment to protecting workers in the province of Ontario. I think it's a great step forward in order to create safety for the people in the province of Ontario.

I listened carefully to many people speaking in this House. Of course, the Conservatives didn't want anything to do with this issue. I know they'll abolish the WSIB. They have different issues about unions and labour; they don't care about those areas. But in the end, we on this side care about the unions; we care about labour; we care about the people in the province of Ontario. We want to create safe conditions for all of them to work in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to commend the member for London–Fanshawe for being the chief booster of the Liberal Party; you can tell by his remarks, and the remarks from my friend from Ottawa–Orléans as well.

We are questioning the independence of the chief prevention officer, and we question the problems around the prevention council and whether or not they're going to be independent. We are worried that they're not going to be independent. And they should be.

Neither of the two Liberal members who spoke addressed the concerns we raised. They just keep saying how this is a good bill and this is good for injured workers; we're getting everything together so that we can do the best for injured workers. They just ramble around the issue and never once do they address the questions that we have raised: that the independence of the chief prevention officer is under question. Merely by reporting to the minister and having his report looked at and approved by the minister in advance of the release of the report questions his or her independence. None of you ever speak to that. It's a serious worry we've got, and you've got to address that.

You also have to address other areas. We should be investigating alleged reprisals against workers. We're not doing that, and we're not likely to do that. We should be enforcing swiftly, with onerous penalties as well on those who violate health and safety concerns. I don't believe we're going to do that. We're not doing that as well as we should be doing it. We should simplify the prosecution process so that inspectors can prosecute straightforward cases more speedily.

These are some of the areas we need to address. Yes, that is why we, too, are looking forward to the hearings to get opinions from everyone around these issues.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome the family of page Ciaran Thomas to Queen's Park today. Ciaran and his family are from my community of St. Paul's. Joining us today in the members' gallery are Ciaran's mother, Alison; grandmother, Emily; and his sisters Bronwen, Charlotte and Hannah. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Today at Queen's Park is Greek flag-raising day, and I invite all members to come outside for the Greek flag-raising.

I also would like to recognize some of our guests today: the Honourable Mr. Dimitris Azempoulos, the consul general of Greece, will be here; the consul general of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Stavros Augoustidis; Fotini Houlios; and Mr. Panos Androthis.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome one of my constituents from York–South Weston, Barb McLeod, who is here to watch the proceedings today, and we'll have lunch together. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the Ontario PC caucus introduced a motion to give Ontario families relief. The motion calls for the expensive new hydro agency that Premier McGuinty created and called the Ontario Power Authority to be dismantled and the cost of that bureaucracy to be removed from Ontario families' hydro bills.

On Monday afternoon, Ontario families and seniors will see which members of this assembly respect them when they say they can't afford this bloated bureaucracy any longer. Will you join us in offering relief to Ontario families or will your members vote to offer relief to the bureaucrats at your bloated, overpriced agency?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've taken several steps to keep the costs of electricity down, and those actions are

saving energy consumers about $1 billion a year. We froze the compensation structures of all non-bargaining public sector employees. We've limited travel costs and other expenses. We've requested Hydro One and OPG to revise down their 2010 rate applications to find savings, and they did that. All of our energy agencies are significantly reducing their operating costs. For 2011, the OPA has reduced its overall operating budget by 4.1%.

His trash-talking of the public service today is a reminder of the days when they sat in cabinet and they took pleasure in insulting the good work being done by our public servants—our teachers, our nurses and our power workers. Those were dark days in energy, they were dark days for this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier McGuinty used to say that the Ontario Power Authority was a transitional agency, so you can't be opposed to dismantling the OPA for a principled reason. The Premier's so-called transitional agency keeps on growing more and more bloated. It's gone from $14 million to $80 million in just five years. It may seem small to you, but that $80 million works out to $20 a year for seniors who are struggling to keep the lights on at home.

Every day members of the Ontario PC caucus hear from seniors and families who say they're unable to pay their hydro bills any longer. Don't you and the McGuinty Liberals sitting around hear the same thing?

Hon. Brad Duguid: On Tuesday, after a line of questioning similar to that, where I think the Leader of the Opposition received a fair amount of push-back, he said this to the media, "Listen, in the past we've seemed to function without the Ontario Power Authority."

I'd like to ask the member opposite what their definition of "functional" is, because when his leader was in cabinet, their system wasn't functional at all. In fact, it was completely dysfunctional. Does he think it was functional to put up the use of coal by 127%? Does he think it was functional, when his government was in power, that their failure to invest in power nearly crippled our power system? Did he think it was functional to pay $1 billion in import costs to US coal plants just to keep the lights on? Their memory may be fading but families are going to remember the dysfunctional energy system—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This, coming from a minister who raised the use of coal in Ontario by 29% last year alone.

Yesterday, Premier McGuinty boasted about recovering $5 million a year from a sham of an agency review. The Ontario PCs have found a lot more in savings that can be taken off the hydro bills: $80 million a year more, and more than that, if the OPA keeps bloating at its current pace.

If the McGuinty Liberals voted for the Ontario PC motion to dismantle the OPA and take that cost off hydro bills, it would give Ontario seniors and families real relief, the relief they need. Why do you constantly vote to raise hydro bills, but will not support an Ontario PC motion that will actually reduce Ontario families' hydro bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll tell you why we won't support their motion: They have absolutely no credibility when it comes to accountability and transparency in government—none whatsoever. Their leader sat in cabinet and actually allowed Hydro One to buy a yacht. Their leader sat in cabinet and allowed Hydro One CEO Eleanor Clitheroe to earn $2.2 million a year. The CEO today earns half that amount, and that doesn't include inflation. Our energy agencies are no longer in the yachting business. The salaries of the top 20 executives at OPG are now on average 35% lower than they were when your leader sat in cabinet.

And let's not forget, the PCs removed Hydro One and OPG from being subject to freedom of information. Why did they do that? Because they wanted to make sure that they could keep those the energy agencies for their own personal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: He just doesn't get it. Families are crying for relief and he wants to rattle on about some irrelevant stuff.

Two weeks ago, the Minister of Finance held a press conference—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: To the Minister of Energy, again. He almost dislocated his shoulder from patting himself on the back for finding 0.0002% savings from a sham of an agency review.

On the same day, McGuinty Liberals hinted that the Premier is thinking about using the budget to streamline the alphabet soup of his expensive and bloated hydro agencies. You've made it clear you'll fight tooth and nail to keep Ontario families paying for an overgrown OPA bureaucracy they don't need, that you created. What sort of tinkering with hydro agencies will you do and how much more will that cost Ontario families?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That party wants to continue to attack the Ontario Power Authority. That's fine; we understand where they're coming from, because they don't support any of the work that is being done by that agency. They do not support the efforts the Ontario Power Authority is making to help us get out of dirty coal, something that you put up 127% during your time in office, something we brought down by 70%, and that will be gone altogether by 2014, cleaning our air and building a healthier future for our kids.

Who would be putting out those feed-in tariff contracts that are creating thousands of jobs across this province, benefiting farmers—the microFIT projects that are benefiting farmers—to the tune of $10,000? Under

them, they wouldn't need those contracts going out because they don't support those jobs; they don't support the farmers when it comes to the microFIT program. They don't support cleaning up—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: If the Premier's sham of an agency review is anything to go by, then Ontario families should brace themselves to keep paying for an Ontario Power Authority they don't need and can't afford. The crowning achievement of the Premier's agency review was to take two bloated agencies, Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario Realty Corp., and turn them into one uber-bloated agency.

Premier McGuinty's expensive hydro mess includes more bureaucracies than you can shake a stick at: Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, the Independent Electricity System Operator, the Ontario Energy Board, the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., not to mention the Ministry of Energy itself. How much more will it cost Ontario families when you merge the OPA with one of these bloated agencies?

1040

Hon. Brad Duguid: I say again, that party has absolutely no credibility when it comes to accountability and transparency in our government agencies and government altogether—no credibility whatsoever.

Your leader sat in cabinet, as I said before, while Hydro One purchased a yacht. I think Defiant was the name they called it.

At the same time, your CEO, Eleanor Clitheroe, was making $2.2 million a year. The CEO of Hydro One now makes half that amount. As I said before, the top 20 executives at OPG are now, on average, earning 35% lower than when you were in cabinet. Who are you to lecture us when it comes to accountability in those agencies?

When they were in power, those agencies were absolutely out of control. Their operating costs are going down. We're working hard with those agencies—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It appears the minister's on a ship, but I think it's the Titanic.

Premier McGuinty does not show respect for Ontario families with half measures and tinkering that do nothing to lower Ontario's hydro bills.

Eleven thousand bureaucrats at the alphabet soup of hydro bureaucracies earn over $100,000 a year. That list includes a security guard at OPG, a landscape architect at Hydro One, a Web and Internet adviser at the OEB, and something called an "executive adviser" at the OPA. The McGuinty Liberals won't agree to shine light on these agencies and how they've bloated or to dismantle the expensive OPA bureaucracies that Ontario families do not need and cannot afford.

Will you finally put Ontario families first and support our motion? Will you, Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member opposite talks about respecting Ontario families, but their actions do nothing but disrespect Ontario families. Why would you vote against a 10% reduction in their energy bills? Our clean energy benefit is bringing down energy rates by 10% for Ontario families, farmers and small businesses. Show some respect for Ontario families and support our efforts to lower their energy bills.

How can you claim to respect Ontario families when you voted against and opposed the creation of thousands of jobs that Ontario families in this province need, especially at this time in our history? We need those clean energy jobs, jobs that you don't support, jobs that you're going to kill. That's totally disrespectful for Ontario families. If they respected Ontario families, they'd be supporting our efforts to clean our air and get out of coal and build a healthier future—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Acting Premier told the press that he'd be campaigning with his federal Liberal counterparts if a federal election is called later this week. If a voter asks him whether he supports the Liberal Party of Canada's plan to roll back corporate tax cuts, what exactly is he going to say?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As I've indicated publicly, Ontario's corporate tax rates are still far above our sister provinces. So it's important to understand, as many Ontarians do, and apparently the leader of the third party doesn't want to do, that we have to be competitive with Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. That is just the reality.

We also have to continue to be competitive with OECD countries. Canada's at the mid-level right now. Frankly, by doing what we've been able to do, that helps all of Canada be competitive but, most importantly, makes sure that we won't lose jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After taking $4 billion from the federal government to implement a new sales tax on everything from home heating to gasoline and heeding Mr. Flaherty's call to offer a multi-billion-dollar handout to some of Canada's richest corporations, how can the McGuinty Liberals now claim that they're the only ones who can take on Harper's Conservatives when they've been in lockstep with them all along? Seriously, who is this minister trying to kid?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll remind the member opposite that it was $4.3 billion that the Conservative government gave us because they wanted us to harmonize the sales tax. Every nickel of that went to small businesses and to Ontario families—every nickel of that. In fact, the last payment will be in June, which is important. By the way, in British Columbia, they didn't forward that on to the people.

I would remind the member opposite that the pulp and paper industry in northern Ontario said they needed these tax changes not only to help with the competitiveness of taxes but to help deal with the rising value of the dollar. The member may not have noticed this: The Canadian dollar is above par right now.

This is the right thing for jobs in Ontario. It's the right thing for a better future. It's the right thing for a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People realize that this is a desperate move from a desperate government. The McGuinty Liberals have no credibility criticizing the Harper Conservatives. This government brought in Harper's HST and copied his corporate tax cuts.

Will the Acting Premier be giving every Ontarian a little grain of salt to go with the budget next week?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Today is Harry Houdini's birthday, and that member wants to get herself out of all kinds of untenable tie-ups. She doesn't want to create jobs in Thunder Bay or in Timmins; she wants to create them in Red Deer and Edmonton. She doesn't want to create jobs in Windsor; she wants to create them in Detroit. She doesn't want to create them in Hamilton; she wants to create them in Pittsburgh.

We've laid out a clear plan that will create jobs and enhance investment. That is why even Ken Lewenza and Sid Ryan advised her to go easy on her criticisms of our tax policy, because they know it's important to a new and revitalized auto sector and more jobs across the province. It's the right plan for a better future for all of our children.

SCHOOL FEES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. Our public schools were founded over a century ago on the idea that no one should be denied an education because of how much money their parents had.

Why are already-stretched families being asked to pay more and more to put their children through high school?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think that it's important to remind the honourable member that education has been a priority for this government and, as such, we have increased our investment in education by some 40% since coming to office. We also have worked very closely with teachers and with parents to understand where we need to be streaming those dollars.

I'm happy to say that as a result of our investments, because our focus has been on enabling students to be successful, we now have results that demonstrate our students are more successful. In fact, our students are among the top 10 best in the world as a result of the investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It may be a surprise to the minister, but a new report was released by People for Education. It shows that high school course and activity fees are on the rise. Families are now paying almost 20% more in course fees this year, on average $25 per course, to give their sons and daughters the education they need.

Why are families being asked to pay more for public education?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to be able to correct the honourable member when I say that fees are not allowable for anything that is a curriculum requirement in our schools. Students are not required to pay fees for those things.

As a result of concerns that have come to us from parents, we have put guidelines around fees in place. We have done so with the co-operation of our parents. In fact, we will also be presenting guidelines this week around fundraising activities as well.

We are very conscious about the importance of ensuring that access to a quality education in the province of Ontario is equitable for all students. That is why we have acted as we have to put guidelines in place for fees. We will be coming out with guidelines for fundraising and also for corporate participation in our schools.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In a September 2010 letter, the Minister of Education stated that mandatory flat fees for courses leading to graduation are ineligible for fee charges, just as she said just now. Yet nearly 70% of high schools are charging course fees. That is the point.

Families are feeling the squeeze, and paying the bills at the end of a month is already a struggle for thousands of Ontarians. Why are the McGuinty Liberals refusing to enforce their own policy, and once again making family essentials more expensive when they need to be more affordable?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to inform the honourable member that, as part of our fee guideline structure, we are now requiring boards to report what fees are collected, how they are collected and why they are collected to ensure that boards are, in fact, complying with the fee guidelines. Up until now, no government has undertaken this kind of reporting.

We are very serious about ensuring that students and their families are not required to pay fees for what is required of students to gain their secondary school diploma or their elementary education. We are very serious about this. That is why we have put the reporting requirements in place. We want to know where boards are charging fees and what they're charged for, because no student should be required to pay a fee in order to graduate from secondary school.

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Attorney General. This morning I moved a motion in the legislative committee on justice policy which called for an investigation into the victims' justice fund. This was an

opportunity for parliamentarians to undertake their role as representatives of Ontario families and empower them to support victims of crime, such as Liz Hoage.

Liberal committee members voted against my motion, claiming that it was partisan. But my motion was taken directly from the 2008 recommendations of former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry in a report you commissioned.

Why did you direct your parliamentary assistant and other Liberal committee members to vote against my motion that would have supported victims of crime?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In fact, no government has been more complete in its support for victims of crime. The very report he references, the former Chief Justice's report, says that Ontario has the best approach to victims' issues in Canada.

The problem with his motion, quite simply, is he sought to start at 2003, but we have a very good record of making sure that there's not unallocated money in the victims' justice fund.

He really should have looked at his own record for eight years, when they built money up in the victims' justice fund, did not disburse it to victims, did not disburse it to agencies, and had a $77-million surplus at the end. We now have, apart from the contingency, $3 million in unallocated funds.

Our record is clear. He needs to investigate his own.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I notice the Attorney General doesn't speak to the victims.

Today's motion would have led to an investigation of the flawed victims' justice fund and produced recommendations to ensure that the needs of victims are addressed—victims, Attorney General. Yet your parliamentary assistant voted against my motion because he said it was partisan.

My motion was taken directly from the 2008 recommendations of former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry—a direct quote from him. Clearly, it was your parliamentary assistant and Liberal committee members who were playing politics on this issue.

But if you agree with your parliamentary assistant that Chief Justice Roy McMurtry is, in fact, partisan, will you still have him conduct the inquiry on the G20?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member, with respect, is not being accurate in our approach. Our approach has been all about supporting victims. In fact, one of former Chief Justice McMurtry's suggestions was that we make the victim quick response program permanent, which we're doing, to make sure that we were as generous as people would expect us to be with victims.

Under both the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, where we put an extra $100 million in to clear up the backlog, and under the victims' justice fund, where all of those funds are allocated to victims' issues or to agencies that serve victims directly—that's exactly what we're doing: spending public funds for the assistance of victims. What the member wishes to do is to go back to his own record, which did not support victims as they should, built up an unallocated surplus, and he wants to ignore that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you will know that Mayor Diodati and his council in Niagara Falls are concerned about the possible use of Agent Orange in their community. They want something done about it. They want an investigation. They call over and they're told, "No problem. We've got this guy, Len Ritter, who's supposedly the guy who's going to be the independent fellow doing the review."

How can the mayor of Niagara Falls—and, more importantly, the citizens of Niagara Falls—feel confident that there will be an independent review when we know that Len Ritter was the very guy who approved the use of Agent Orange when he was the head of that department back in the 1980s?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm very pleased to stand and speak about this issue again. It's obviously very important to us, and we're committed to finding all the facts and sharing the information in a transparent fashion.

In fact, our 1-800 number is operating and continues to receive inquiries and questions from people across Ontario. Since March 23 we've received 466 calls. The WSIB line continues to receive calls from former workers who were possibly exposed to the herbicide, and as of March 22, WSIB has received 534 calls and 171 claims that have been initiated.

We've fulfilled our commitment to establish an independent panel looking at 2,4,5-T, and certainly Dr. Ritter will be supported by panel members who will be serving him on a part-time basis to get to the bottom of this issue. There are far more questions and answers, and we're committed to getting all those answers, and I'm committed to making sure those are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The answer that Mayor Diodati and his council want to know is, how is there going to truly be an independent investigation when the person you appointed to head the investigation—and he in turn appoints those people to help him—was the guy who approved the use of Agent Orange? How can that be independent? The mayor of Niagara Falls and the citizens of Niagara Falls and citizens across this province need to know there will be an independent review. How could you have appointed somebody to head this up who was working for the very department that allowed the use of Agent Orange and eventually became the head of it at that time?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: It's pretty clear to me what this honourable member is trying to do. He's trying his hardest to discredit a world-renowned toxicologist. In fact, the honourable member has been trying to discredit the panel Chair even before the panel Chair was chosen.

As we all know, 2,4,5-T was removed from the list of approved herbicides nearly 30 years ago. Ontario is the first Canadian jurisdiction to launch a government-wide

review of the use of this herbicide. Dr. Ritter would have been fresh out of university 30 years ago, working as a junior toxicologist for Health Canada. I'm sure that the honourable member knows that science has evolved significantly since the 1980s. Dr. Ritter is an award-winning toxicologist and a world-leading expert in the use of herbicides and pesticides. I have great confidence in Dr. Ritter. I'm sure that the rest of this Legislature will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Earlier this week, the member for Nepean–Carleton visited Pickering to stand in front of a transformer station and talk about the debt retirement charge that her party slapped on my constituents' hydro bills, as well as her party's opposition to clean energy and the modernization of our electrical system. I know that the few people who showed up to hear about her party's plan for energy left disappointed when she refused to share even one thoughtful idea her party has.

With so much at stake in our electrical system, would the minister get to the real facts out there in Pickering for their families and tell them what you're doing to build the modern electricity system that they need today and will definitely need in the future?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Ajax–Pickering for that question. I want to remind them that this is the government that refurbished the switchyard at that very Pickering transformer station. This is the government that upgraded the Whitby transformer station. This is the government that refurbished the Cherrywood transformer station in northwest Pickering. This is the government that brought energy reliability back to the families of Pickering and broader Durham region.

1100

When PC caucus members go out and hold these photo ops, I think it's just a tad embarrassing for them to note that they're standing in front of power infrastructure that they neglected and that we've upgraded. Our government has invested more than double what they used to invest in transmission upgrades. These are investments that that PC Party has opposed every step of the way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, also last week, the Leader of the Opposition went to London, stood in front of a transformer station and talked about the debt retirement that his party placed on our constituents in London. Also, he—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member will come to order.

There have been a number of comments that I'm hearing from the opposition benches about whether a member will be here or not. I don't want to hear about this. I know I'm not going to be here, but I don't need the comments being thrown across the floor at other members on the other side. The electorate will decide on October 6. I do not need to hear from you in that regard. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Also, they showed their opposition to our clean energy strategy, that will make sure we have clean energy in the province of Ontario. I know the two people who showed up wanted to hear about their plan for energy, which the Leader of the Opposition is proposing for Ontario, but you know what? They left frustrated because they didn't hear anything, because they refused to share it.

Minister, can you tell us and tell my constituents in London about your plan for energy in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Duguid: Absolutely. I want to thank the member for London–Fanshawe for that question. I welcome the opportunity to share with him and this Legislature the fact that this government indeed has a long-term energy plan that invests in building a clean, reliable and modern energy system.

It may, however, be just a little bit embarrassing for the Leader of the Opposition to know that the particular transfer station that he was standing in front of in London had just undergone a $6-million upgrade to install a new capacitor bank that will help facilitate the phase-out of coal. That's the kind of investment and upgrade that's going to help the reliability of our energy system and help build a clean and healthy future for our kids. That's the kind of investment, however, the PC Party failed to make when they were in office and have consistently opposed every step of the way.

I think it's just a little bit embarrassing for the Leader of the Opposition—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Minister of Energy: Over the past two months, I and my colleagues have been travelling the province, talking to and hearing from Ontario families and seniors who say that they're looking for relief on their skyrocketing hydro bills. I don't think it's too much of a stretch to say that we've visited almost every transformer station in the province, some of them twice. Minister, will you do the right thing and give Ontario families relief on their hydro bills by voting in favour of our opposition day motion to scrap the Ontario Power Authority? Or should we go back out, start our cars, get out to those communities and tell them you don't care or give a damn about their hydro bills?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind members on both sides of the House that temperate language is very useful in helping to maintain order and decorum.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: If that member cared about energy costs for Ontario families, he and his party would be supporting our clean energy benefit. It's taking 10%

off the bills of every family in this province and every small business. Families are saving about $150 a year from this, small businesses about $1,700, farmers about $2,000 on average a year. That party isn't supporting the assistance that we're providing for Ontario families.

Our clean energy benefit is helping Ontario families cope with the costs of rising energy. Investments have to be made in our energy system. We need to build a clean, reliable, modern system, something they did not believe in when they were in power, something they don't believe in now. We're helping Ontario families; they're opposing the help that we're providing to those families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I guess it leaves us no choice but to start our cars and go out and tell them that you don't care about their skyrocketing hydro bills.

In each town that we visited, families and seniors say they simply can't afford it. In fact, if they knew we were in town, they would come out in front, join us at the transformer stations and tell us that they could not afford their hydro bills, and they would bring their bills with them. They told us that they cannot afford your billion-dollar smart meter tax machines, your billion-dollar energy exports to Quebec and New York and your billion dollars a year that you're making of the debt retirement charge by turning it into a permanent tax grab.

It would be nice, for a change, if we could tell our old friends in Cobourg and Wallaceburg and Goderich and Mississauga, or any of the other 35 stops, that the McGuinty Liberals actually took something off their hydro bills to give them relief. Unfortunately, we can't do that, but you have a chance to abolish the OPA by voting for our motion on Monday. Will you do that?

Hon. Brad Duguid: You know something that would be really nice for Ontario families? It would be really nice of the party opposite and their leader to tell Ontario families why they're afraid to share with Ontario families what their plan is for energy. I can think of a lot of reasons why you'd be hesitant to do that—maybe because you don't support that clean energy benefit taking 10% off their bills. That will be hard to explain to Ontario families. Maybe it's because you don't support the thousands of clean energy jobs that we're creating in communities right across Ontario. Maybe you don't want Ontario families to know that you're going to kill thousands of jobs in their communities. Maybe it's because you don't support our efforts to get out of dirty coal by 2014, cleaning our air and providing a healthier future for Ontario families.

I can understand why you don't want to share your plan, but Ontario families deserve to know. What is your plan? When are you going to bring it out? When—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health. Dr. Hazel Lynn, the medical officer of health for Grey–Bruce, has testified before various government bodies, stating that her health unit has conducted a formal risk assessment of Bruce Power's plan to transport 16 massive radioactive steam generators across the Great Lakes to Sweden. She claims this assessment shows that this plan is risk-free. Does the Minister of Health support Dr. Lynn's conclusion that there is no health risk to this widely opposed plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy, Speaker.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's interesting that the NDP continues to dwell on this particular issue, because it has been raised in the past, and I think we've been very straightforward in our response to this in the past. But it is interesting that this week, in the wake of what's going on in Japan, that the issue would quietly emerge here again.

I don't want to question their motives on this, and I never would, but let me just repeat: The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has studied this matter in absolute detail. They've held public hearings. This is a federal agency that is fully responsible for making decisions on this particular matter. I wrote to my federal colleague on this, and I wrote to Bruce Power as well, making sure that they're taking every measure to protect the safety of Ontarians. But I asked the leader opposite whether she wrote to anybody on this at all when the hearings were going on, and she—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is actually back to the Minister of Health. Dr. Lynn is using her formal risk assessment to persuade Ontarians that the transport of radioactive steam generators is safe, but there's a little bit of a problem. When Dr. Lynn refused to provide us with a copy of the actual risk assessment, we submitted a freedom-of-information request, and what did we get back? A speech, a series of emails and a template for what a health risk assessment might look like.

Is the Minister of Health concerned that a local medical officer of health is testifying before government bodies and speaking about this plan when a formal health risk assessment she cites doesn't even seem to exist?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission held public hearings on this, and as I said, I, as Minister of Energy for this province, wrote to Bruce Power and my federal colleagues, impressing on them the importance to ensure that all measures were taken to protect public safety. The leader of the NDP had an opportunity to appear before those hearings. She could have—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: If she was really concerned about this when those hearings were going on—it wasn't that long ago—she could have let her voice be known. Why is it that today, in the wake of what is going on in Japan, the leader of the opposition decides that now she wants to make sure that her voice is heard? I can't help but think that some of the media were right last week when they suggested that the NDP fascination with nuclear—all of a sudden, again this week—is nothing less than distasteful.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Again, I want to remind all members that the use of temperate language in this place is very important. It helps to maintain order and decorum. And any time that we start to bring it below a level that starts to deliver an attack at another member, it is not helpful for the dignity of this House as a whole. I would just ask all members to be conscious of that.

New question.

1110

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The Georgetown South project to expand GO Transit service and to build an air-rail link to connect Union Station to Pearson airport has seen a number of significant improvements in my community since its original proposal. These include making Weston an air-rail link stop and tunnelling GO trains and the air-rail link through parts of the Weston rail corridor to reduce noise and vibration and improving safety and the look of the corridor. It also includes expanded GO service for local residents to downtown Toronto and a commitment for a new GO station at Weston.

It has come to my attention, however, that word is spreading in the community questioning GO's commitment to this station. Can the minister please assure my constituents that the planned new Weston GO station will go ahead?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for the question about the Weston GO station, for which she advocated, and I want to assure her and her constituents that we are proceeding with the construction of the new Weston GO station. That is on track. It's because, as I say, of her advocacy that the consultation took place in the community.

Now, most riders will take the service from the airport to Union Station, but we recognized, as a result of conversation in the community, that there was also an opportunity to give residents in that community new service as well.

That construction of the GO station is going to be phased. The first phase will be to shift the existing station platform from the north of Lawrence Avenue to just south of Lawrence Avenue. Then, as we proceed with the station building and additional parking, Metrolinx will be speaking with local stakeholders and updating them regularly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: As the minister knows, it is very important for the residents of York South–Weston to have the opportunity to provide input as this important work moves forward. The new GO station will be a welcome addition to the community, especially as services increase. It is very important that the community continues to be consulted and informed about the next stages in the process. Metrolinx has stated that the new station will be a temporary modular structure and that a master station plan will be carried out in 2011 to determine future transportation centre requirements.

Can the minister please tell this House more about this future GO station, as well as the next step for community input and involvement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Metrolinx is working with the city of Toronto and the Urban Land Institute to develop the station master plan for the future Weston station, and there's also going to be a public meeting in May 2011, a bit more than a month from now, to generate ideas and further development options for the Weston community.

Metrolinx will also be adopting the mobility hub guidelines to inform the station development. That process will involve the city and it will also involve the local community.

Because of the advocacy, again, of the members from York South–Weston and Davenport, we've acted on community concerns regarding the construction of the whole Georgetown South corridor. GO has a dedicated community relations team and community offices in the Weston and Strachan neighbourhoods to make sure that there's ongoing communication with the community.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Acting Premier. In recent media, you've been telling anyone who would listen that you are campaigning for Michael Ignatieff. This is the same Michael Ignatieff who said that Premier McGuinty's imposition of industrial wind turbines raises a threat to democracy. Will you backtrack on your support for Michael Ignatieff or for Premier McGuinty?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the member—and I say this to all members in the House. It appears that there is going to be a federal election campaign. I don't want to see this election campaign fought out in this chamber. I want to see—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, on both sides.

I'd like to ensure that there are questions that are asked—I'm going to give the member an opportunity, as he still had some time on the clock—to ensure that it's a question that is asked that pertains to policy of the provincial government.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'll simply rephrase it, Speaker.

There was a comment made pertaining to industrial wind turbines and a threat which is seen by your federal counterparts to those. Are you going to backtrack on your support for your federal counterparts or your Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What Ontario would like to see is our clean energy industry get the same support—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark will withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdrawn.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we would like to see is a national government that will give the same support to

Ontario's clean energy business as it does to the fossil fuel business in western Canada. What we would like to see is a federal government that will treat Ontario the same under labour force market adjustment programs as it does the other provinces. What I also said is, we want a federal government that will give Ontario an immigration settlement agreement that is as generous as it is to the other provinces. Finally, what we want to see is a federal government that acknowledges the work of the Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Again, I remind the honourable member on this side of the House to talk about provincial issues.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: There's a quote out there from the Liberal candidate for Haldimand–Norfolk that says, "I have to take what you say to" the Ontario energy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I am being equal, and that's what I'm trying to do. Don't challenge the Chair, please, Minister.

I just remind the member to be talking about provincial issues and not a candidate for federal office.

Mr. Peter Shurman: In fairness, I am talking about provincial issues. I'm quoting a candidate who says, "I have to take what you say to" the Ontario energy minister "and tell him there are problems with wind turbines. I will tell him that you are not being heard."

The Acting Premier may want to turn around and pass the message along to the energy minister sitting behind him.

The question for the Acting Premier is, how do you keep a straight face saying that you support Premier McGuinty's expensive wind turbine experiments when you don't?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am proud of the fact that we have the largest, most expanding clean energy program in the world—without question. I am proud of the fact that this government has invested unprecedented resources in closing coal and in opening up not only windmills but also solar farms. And what about biogas for our farming communities?

Most of all, I'm proud of the important incentives we've given to the creation of jobs throughout southern Ontario and eastern Ontario. That is the kind of support that is necessary to build a new industry, to build better schools, to build better health care and, most importantly, to build a better and cleaner energy future for all of our children.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Young adults with developmental disabilities are languishing on waiting lists for both Passport funding and special services at home. A recent ARCH alert says that 2,492 young adults are receiving Passport funding but nearly 4,000 people are on the waiting list. The same ARCH alert says that special services at home is frozen: No new applications have been approved since 2008—three long years.

Will the minister assure this House and the thousands of families—some of whom are here today—who languish on waiting lists that they will receive top priority in her ministry and in the budget next Thursday?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, I would like to welcome the families and their children in the gallery today. I want to thank them for their advocacy roles on behalf of their children. I always say that parents are the best advocates for their children. I talk to a lot of them, and I'm so impressed.

What I want to say to the member on the opposite side is that the Passport program was created by this government. When you were in power, you just did nothing. When we came into power we initiated that wonderful program, and it's a very, very successful program.

Yes, we have a waiting list, and yes, I would like to eliminate this waiting list. So we'll have to wait for the budget. But this government is determined to do more for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1120

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister doesn't understand that the program is frozen. This minister knows full well that thousands of desperate families have begged for adequate support for years. Special services at home cannot be offered if no applications are being approved.

In the last fiscal year, the program provided an average of only $4,200 per family for respite care. Even worse, last March, there were 7,160 families on the wait-list. We know that a small amount of money has been allocated for Passport funding for this year, but that will only reduce the wait-list by 3%.

Will this minister tell families that every young adult in Ontario who qualifies for Passport funding and special services at home will get the services they need, or does she prefer to dither while they languish on wait—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I appreciate the question and I appreciate the concern from the member of the opposition.

I want to remind him that this government created the Passport program, helping more than 2,500 people with funding in their communities. Since 2003, we have increased annual base funding for special services at home. We have increased the budget by 50%. We have invested in developmental services 500 million new dollars and increased funding by 50%.

This government has done a lot. Do we have more to do? Yes, we have more to do, and we will be working with the parents and with our partners to make sure that we continue to invest in that program.

EDUCATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: This morning my question is to the Minister of Education. Parents in my riding of Peter-

borough have been contacting me with their concerns. They're concerned about the situation that is unfolding in Wisconsin. Teachers there are losing their collective bargaining rights and teachers are being portrayed as overpaid and underworked. Parents in my riding are very concerned that a similar sentiment could be making its way north of the border.

What can I tell my constituents to address their concerns? Do they need to be worried about the future of their child's education?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: That's a very important question, and I can say that it's a question that I've heard from some of my constituents as well.

What I can say to the honourable member is that our government, our party, is absolutely committed to the collective bargaining process for teachers, ECEs and all support workers in our schools. We are absolutely committed to labour peace. We are absolutely committed to peace in our schools. We value peace in our schools because labour peace supports student achievement. That is why test scores are up in the province of Ontario.

We have also been able to increase graduation rates. It's because our committed staff in all of our schools have been able to focus on doing what they do best, and that is educating all of our students.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Parents in my riding will be reassured to hear that we are committed to public education and value teachers in this province.

Minister, we all know that the economy is starting to recover from the recession in Ontario and the rest of the world. Some jurisdictions have cut taxes and services to alleviate pressures on their budgets. How could I assure my constituents that we remain committed to student achievement right here in Ontario?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Our commitment has been very clear since we've come to government. I would say that even in the face of the most significant economic event—the recession—our commitment to education is manifest in our commitment to full-day kindergarten. We know that the opposition call it a frill; they say that this is not the time to do it. They will cancel full-day kindergarten.

We are committed to supporting student achievement in the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member will withdraw the comment she just made, please.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I will withdraw.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We are, on this side of the House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order, on both sides.

Please continue.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Methinks they doth protest too much.

Interjections.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Just open your eyes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That, from the honourable ministers, is not helpful either.

New question.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you say your unaccountable LHIN bureaucracies are helping people, but the facts on the ground speak otherwise. Your South East LHIN is supposed to be helping people with acquired brain injuries, people like Scott Finlay, who was injured in the 1978 Canadian downhill championships. The Finlay family wants to ensure that Scott is going to be cared for, but your LHIN can't figure out where or how they spend money for people with acquired brain injuries. Minister, why are your LHINs not meeting the needs of Ontario's people?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Quite the contrary: The LHINs are delivering exceptional results for the people in those LHINs. Before the creation of the LHINs, there was no one responsible for tying together, for streamlining the health care system for people who needed access to health care. There was no one who was actually looking at the system from the patient's perspective to make sure the right supports were in the right place for the people.

We have significantly improved care for people, thanks to the LHINs. Our aging-at-home strategy has provided supports for people in the community so they can stay at home, where they want to be, for as long as possible, without having to go into long-term care.

Our plan is to continue improving care for people. The opposition has an altogether different plan when it comes to health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, you do have room for improvement. Your LHINs just keep piling up more and more expenses.

I spoke to your LHIN chairman Georgina Thompson about funding for ABI patients. Two months later, she told me she had some good news and some bad news. The bad news was that the LHIN doesn't know how or where they're spending money for acquired brain injury patients. The good news, though, was that the South East LHIN had hired a consultant for $357,000 to track down where the LHIN spends their money for people like Scott Finlay.

Minister, you allow these unaccountable bureaucrats to keep soaking up money that should go to front-line care for people like Scott Finlay. What use is a bureaucracy that needs to hire a consultant to track their chequebook?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm afraid the party opposite and the party on this side of the House have a completely different vision of the future of health care in this province.

The first fact the people opposite need to understand is that LHINs actually cost no more money than what existed under their governance. They had two layers of bureaucracy, which we replaced with the LHINs to give people in the community a local voice.

The member from Kingston and the Islands tells me that he has been working very hard to find a resolution in this particular case but, I tell you, cutting $3 billion out of health care is going to do nothing to help people who are seeking help in this province.

We have a demonstrated improvement in health care in this province. When they had the chance before, they cut health care. If they have a chance, they'll do it again.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: My question is for the Minister of Labour. For two and a half long years, workers at Brantford walked the picket line, while their employers, Engineered Coated Products, brought in busloads of replacement workers under heavy security.

ECP has a sister plant in British Columbia. In British Columbia, they negotiated a settlement. Do you know why? Because British Columbia has banned the use of temporary replacement workers. The ECP Ontario plant has become the poster child for anti-scab legislation, yet for two and a half years, the McGuinty government did nothing.

ECP is now shutting its doors. Why has the minister failed these workers, failed this community and failed our economy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It is always very difficult when closures occur, and we do sympathize and feel badly for those families who have, for a long period of time, been without a job.

1130

I would also like to commend the member for Brant, who has been tirelessly advocating and working to try to come to mediation, and trying to support those in need in those communities.

These have been pretty tough economic times. As Minister of Labour, it is always our intent to try to bring both sides to the table and negotiate a settlement. That's always the best way to achieve and arrive at a negotiation that all parties agree to. We will continue, as we always have, to make our mediators available to support the negotiations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: I would say this: Everything that has to do with this lengthy labour dispute points to the need for a ban on temporary replacement workers. The situation has been a lose-lose for absolutely everyone involved. It has hurt and divided the community for two and a half long years. It has left workers and their families struggling. It has now led to a company that is shutting its doors in Ontario and wiping out any economic benefits we could have. It has led to 100 jobs being lost in our economy. It could all have been prevented had the minister done like BC and Quebec and enacted legislation that would ban the use of temporary replacement workers.

My question is to the minister is simple: Will the minister do the right thing and enact legislation that bans the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Back to the families who are affected: We will make our ministry, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and others available to facilitate the transition.

In regard to the other jurisdictions that have instituted certain forums, they in fact have higher instances of strikes. In this province, we've had 99% of all issues resolved prior to stoppages and strikes. We have a great record. We have the longest and the best record of labour peace in 35 years.

We will always work closely with all stakeholders involved to try to achieve and mediate. We will always do what's best for our workers while maintaining a competitive environment, so that companies succeed and survive, we achieve those jobs and so those workers are supported.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm making specific reference to standing order 23 and, in particular, paragraphs (h) and (i). It's with respect to the response by the Minister of Energy to question number 4 put by the leader for the New Democratic Party.

The Speaker rose to address at least the tone of the response, but the Speaker will recall that the response of the minister was to the effect that this question was only being put to exploit the tragedy that's taking place in Japan when, in fact, of course this question has been put by the NDP for well over four weeks, possibly even months now.

For the minister to respond in that way is, in my submission, (1) making an allegation against the leader of the New Democratic Party; and (2) pursuant to paragraph (i), it's imputing "false or unavowed motives" to the leader of the New Democratic Party.

I appreciate this is difficult stuff because, at some point, as more and more things become out of order, there are less and less things that can actually be said or done, as you've put it so many times, in the cut and thrust of debate here in the chamber.

I think it's important that if there's going to be an application of the standing orders, it be consistent; if the application of the standing orders is going to be firmer than it was in the past, it be clear; and if the application of the standing orders is going to have validity and legitimacy in the chamber, it has to be applied to all members, regardless of which side of the Parliament they sit on.

I leave that with you. I know there's another matter being raised that I will address as well, but I suggest to

you that the minister's response in that instance violated standing order 23(i) and 23(h).

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the honourable member from Welland on the point that he's raised regarding standing order 23 and the use of making allegations against another member.

This is an issue that I have talked about in the past. I did, as the honourable member said, make reference to and reminded the honourable minister of the importance of the use of temperate language in assisting and maintaining order and decorum within this place.

I will not get into the practice of reviewing Hansard to try to determine whether an allegation was made. I will leave it in the hands of the minister, because I heard comments that were made, and there was some difficulty because of the tone within the chamber, but I will leave it to the minister. If, in the minister's mind, he chooses to withdraw that comment, I will leave that to him to deal with.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a separate point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to preface this by making it very clear that members of the PC caucus respect entirely any of your decisions and rulings, but I am, on behalf of our caucus, asking for a reconsideration of your caution to the House today with respect to the bringing in of the federal Parliament into the provincial Legislature.

I want to remind you, Speaker, and the members here, that we've been living in a federal minority Parliament since 2006. Certainly since the election of 2008, when the potential of a possible coalition was discussed, the current government has been on the thin edge of a knife that could fall on any given day based on the posturing on all sides of that Parliament.

We're not in a new situation where, as you said today, we could be in the throes of a federal election. We've been in that situation since 2008, quite frankly. As most people in this country know, it's been a debate going on in the media ad infinitum.

I want to ask you to consider the validity of that point, and then I want to point out to you, Speaker, that, since 2006, in this House, if I had a dollar for every time I heard the members on the government side tell us, "Pick up the phone and call your federal counterparts," and then have an ad hominem attack on the federal government, but by extension trying to include us in that equation, I wouldn't have to worry about my retirement fund, I can assure you of that, because it would be well funded.

Then, post your caution today, Mr. Speaker, the member for Peterborough, in what we all know are staged government questions—nobody is silly enough or naive enough to believe that the member for Peterborough wrote that question; we know they're staged government questions—handed off to the Minister of Education, to what? Talk about a situation in a state of the union of the United States of America and to try to draw a parallel to the opposition party in Ontario.

I'm asking you, Speaker, to reconsider your caution to us particularly today, because the point being raised by the member for Thornhill, with respect to the federal Liberal leader indicating that he questioned an act of this provincial Parliament and this provincial government and whether or not it was indeed democratic, is, in fact, I think a valid point, when the Minister of Finance has indicated that he thinks it's more important to be out campaigning for that Liberal federal leader than doing his job as the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask you for reasonable reconsideration on that matter.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I join with the opposition House leader in his submissions to you on this broader area of the Speaker's comments earlier today about the inappropriateness of the politicization of question period.

1140

With respect, Speaker, question period is rife, it's rich with politicization, and there isn't a single election year that I can recall here—and some who have been here longer than I might refute that, but I doubt if they can—when, during the course of a federal election, or even after one, for that matter, or other provincial elections, that provincial members, provincial leaders, haven't been taken to task during the course of exchanges for what their federal counterpart may or may not have done or be doing.

When a member of the chamber or when a minister very publicly indicates that the minister will be campaigning for federal counterparts, then one questions why it is inappropriate to question that minister as to whether or not that minister adheres to or accepts the political position of that federal counterpart in contrast to the political position that minister's Premier might express.

So I suppose the problem is that we need some clear guidelines here. Once again, what's sauce for the goose has got to be sauce for the gander. The reference by the opposition House leader I listened to—and how many times have I heard Jack invoked during the course of question period, both in actual responses to questions and in exchanges across the chamber? Quite frankly, I want to tell you that New Democrats don't mind. We consider that type of questioning, the answers put and the content of those answers, to be fair in the context.

However, if the Speaker, if the Chair is going to find—and, again, the Speaker has that jurisdiction—that that is not an appropriate exchange, then, one, we have to know what the guidelines are. Does it only take place during the election period? Because we haven't had an election called yet, although everybody and their uncle is predicting one. Is it only during the election period, or is it acceptable throughout the rest of the year during a pre-election period?

These are the sorts of questions we have of you in terms of trying to be careful, as members, to not violate the Speaker's ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I don't often agree with the other House leaders, but I do agree that we don't live in a

vacuum. In fact, we have experienced three federal elections in our tenure here as government and you in this chair have experienced at least one, and we've survived, and so we leave it to your discretion and your judgment as to how you want to govern the House during this election period.

I would only note that, as the member for Welland noted, if one side is to do it, then all sides should be allowed to do it and that we should be looking at fairness more than at specific allegations from one side or the other.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member for Welland and the government House leader, as well as the member for Thornhill for the note that I received from him during question period on this issue. I can understand the need for clarity for all members within the House, and I will do that. I do want to do that, though, and I will do that on Monday, when we have a full House here—I didn't make reference to any specific member not being here—but to do that.

I will make the comment, and I will reiterate this clearer on Monday: Yes, we have been through federal elections, but within this chamber, let's deal with provincial policy.

I have to admit, and will comment further, that I too get troubled at government questions that get asked, particularly those government questions that start to question a position of one of the two opposition parties as well. I don't think that that is helpful. I would rather see a question asked specifically on government policy.

That question on the standing order—I hear the honourable members, two House leaders, regularly talking about standing order 38—is a challenge for the Speaker to deal with, and that is a challenge that every Speaker prior to me has dealt with.

I do also get the point being made about inferences being made to other jurisdictions as well, outside of Ontario. I will endeavour on Monday to provide some clarity for all members.

I thank the honourable members. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: In the gallery with us today are two amazing people in my life, constituency assistants Suzanne Bolton and Alyssa Meyer, who are visiting with us here today. I would ask members who know how important the roles of constituency assistants are to give them a very warm welcome.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'd like to welcome Georgina Bencsik, who is a constituent of mine and the vice-president of the Central Waterfront Neighbourhood Association. She's here to celebrate Ukrainian Heritage Day.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have the pleasure of introducing my brother and sister-in-law Robert and Linda Martiniuk, my sister Rosemary Martiniuk, my nephew Timothy Martiniuk of Vancouver, and my nephew Patrick Martiniuk.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome a former member from the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, representing the riding of High Park-Swansea, Yuri Shymko. Welcome back to the Legislature, Yuri.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CAMPING

Mr. Ted Arnott: Every summer, many Ontario families go camping. Year after year, they find it an enjoyable activity synonymous with summer, sun and relaxation. At a time of increasing strain on household budgets, camping remains, for most families, a relatively affordable way to spend their vacation. But for how long?

Campgrounds are struggling to cope with the current regulatory burden. Consequently, they face mounting costs to implement the changes needed to comply with Liberal red tape. From septic systems required to be twice the size that's necessary, to lack of consultation from the Ministry of the Environment, to inconsistent policy from Hydro One, to the onerous propane regulation 440/08, to lack of access to financing, many campgrounds are struggling, and they wonder if this government is listening.

As critic to the Minister of Tourism and Culture, I was pleased to meet with representatives from Camping in Ontario, who were here yesterday at Queen's Park. They do an outstanding job speaking up for their membership. In September, I wrote on behalf of Camping in Ontario to the Minister of Consumer Services. I said I was concerned by the potentially harmful effect that propane regulation 440/08 would have on campgrounds and the Ontario tourism industry.

I sincerely hope the ministers of consumer services and tourism will start listening. As we approach the camping season, we will need this government to start paying attention and help keep camping affordable for Ontario families.

CANADA WINTER GAMES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to stand up and recognize two young athletes from my riding of London–Fanshawe for their outstanding performance at this year's Canada Winter Games: Samantha McIntosh and Kaylee Whitcroft, who, together with 14 other members of Ontario's ringette team, won gold at this year's games in Halifax. This is a wonderful achievement for these young women. I want to congratulate all the members of Ontario's ringette team for their success.

The Canada Winter Games are the highest level of national competition for young Canadian athletes. Held

once every two years, alternating between winter and summer, the games are crucial for the development of the next generation of Canada's athletes. At this year's games, more than 2,700 athletes competed in over 20 sports.

Ringette has been a part of the Canada Winter Games program since 1991. It's a fast-paced game that emphasizes skill and teamwork. Created in 1963 by a man from North Bay, Ontario, ringette is a truly Canadian sport.

Again, congratulations to the Ontario gold-medal-winning ringette team. Your performance at this year's games sets an example for the next generation of Ontario athletes. I wish you every success in your athletic careers.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Frank Klees: Long-term care is on the brink of a crisis in this province, and although the McGuinty government claims all is well, the residents who live in the long-term-care homes, their families and the staff who care for them know better. They're making their concerns known through thousands of postcards that are being delivered to MPPs.

For the benefit of the Premier and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, here is what those postcards say:

"Dear MPP:

"I've sent you this card to let you know I support the teams that care for the 100,000 residents served each year in Ontario's long-term-care homes. From nurses and personal support workers to housekeeping and laundry staff, to food service workers and maintenance people, each member of those teams ensures a caring and safe home. They deserve our support.

"These teams play an important role in the quality of life and well-being of some of Ontario's frailest elderly. They are the dedicated people who provide care and service to residents all day, every day, yet these teams are threatened because government funding is not keeping pace with increasing resident care needs and regulatory demands.

"Please work to ensure there is appropriate funding to support these teams so they can continue to support Ontario's long-term-care residents. Thank you."

I'm calling on the government to listen to this appeal and make long-term care in this province a priority.

JOHN CARTER

Mr. Michael Prue: March 24 each and every year is Agnes Macphail Day in East York. We celebrate her birthday on that day, and we celebrate it by recognizing members of the community who have distinguished themselves in a way that would have done Agnes proud.

Every year, we have a guest speaker who talks to us about a number of things. This year, we are particularly proud that the guest speaker is our very own Clerk of the Legislature, Deborah Deller, who will be speaking tonight.

This year's winner is Dr. John Carter. He is a person employed by the government of Ontario. He is an expert in museums. He travels around the province looking at museums and telling the government what needs to be done in order to make them better, so that we can all appreciate them more.

He is a proud member of the East York Foundation and was on the East York local architectural advisory committee. He has been active in his union, OPSEU, here at Queen's Park. He was president of the federation of cottagers. He's on the local ratepayers' association. And if all that wasn't enough, he was one of the people instrumental in the founding of the Agnes Macphail Day committee in the first place. He has established some very good things in our neighbourhood: a park in her name and a street as well. He is a very formidable presence.

Everybody and everyone is welcome to come tonight to honour Dr. John Carter and hear Deborah Deller in her great speech that she's going to give.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I need to interject on this, and that is just to remind the members who Agnes Macphail was. She was the first woman elected to this Legislature. She was elected to this Legislature in 1943, and we need to be extremely proud of that.

Also, John Carter is the province's expert when it comes to barns in rural Ontario. John is a great expert when it comes to barns.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Do I detect a bias?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker is not allowed to be biased.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS PROGRAM

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to speak today about a group of exceptionally talented young people in York South–Weston. Very recently, the Learning Enrichment Foundation hosted a great panel presentation competition for youth, boys between 15 and 18 years of age, who have been participating in their Biz Camp and young entrepreneur program. This program is sponsored by Alterna credit union and supported by local small business owners in the Mount Dennis neighbourhood. The young entrepreneurs program encourages youth to develop innovative entrepreneurial ideas.

This year, 12 participants pitched their new small business ideas to a panel of judges. They will have completed a business plan and be ready to start their own entrepreneurial project for the summer. The top three presentations were selected, receiving financial support to get their ideas up and running. I must say that being on the judging panel proved to be a difficult task, given the high calibre of the ideas that were presented.

I would like to offer my congratulations to the first-place winner this year, Rahul, for his scholars learning centre project; the second-place winner, Shlok; the third-place winner, Dhesaka; and Kearry for an honourable mention.

I would also like to thank Jean-Marie Boutot of the Learning Enrichment Foundation youth host program for her wonderful work in engaging youth in our community.

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STEVE AND LISA COOPER

Mr. John O'Toole: It's certainly springtime and a time to celebrate agriculture as it will soon be planting season, although you wouldn't know it from yesterday.

Canada's farming community is blessed with an innovative and entrepreneurial spirit. I'm pleased to congratulate a couple from my riding of Durham who exemplify these very qualities. Steve and Lisa Cooper are the winners of the 2010 Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers Award.

This award program, which began in 1980, recognizes young farmers under the age of 40 who exemplify excellence in their profession. They must demonstrate their production history, environmental stewardship, a contribution to the community and a keen financial acumen.

Steve and Lisa grow more than 30 different crops on their 250-acre farm near Zephyr. They raise goats and chickens and market directly to the public through a community shared agriculture program. In 2009, they had 460 families sign up for their community shared agricultural program, where families paid to receive a weekly basket of fresh goods from their farm.

Steve and Lisa are a wonderful example of innovation in agribusiness today in Ontario. Congratulations to both of them. They are helping to bridge the gap between field and plate, and also celebrate excellence and innovation in agriculture. I'm sure all of us will congratulate Steve and Lisa for their achievements in agriculture in Ontario today.

DONWAY FORD

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to recognize and congratulate a local business in my riding of Scarborough Southwest, Donway Ford. On March 10 of this year, I had the opportunity to take part in the celebration of the reopening of the newly refurbished Donway Ford, which is located at 1975 Eglinton Ave. E. in Scarborough.

Donway Ford is owned and operated by Paul Lenneard and two other business partners and is an automobile dealership that sells many types of Ford vehicles. It also provides an array of services, from auto detailing to body shop work.

The company has a long and storied history in Scarborough. Donway Ford first opened its doors on April 23, 1958. After more than 50 years of serving our community, Donway Ford has grown to over 75 employees, and is still owned and operated by the second generation of families who started the company.

As the member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough Southwest, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my most sincere congratulations on the occasion of the grand reopening of Donway Ford's newest facilities and wish the owners and the employees of the company continued success in the years to come. I know that they will continue to flourish in Scarborough and represent Ford here in Canada.

EDUCATION

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today I rise out of concern for public education in the province of Ontario. Many Ontarians have been following the situation in Wisconsin very closely, where teachers are losing their collective bargaining rights and are being portrayed in a negative light by the government. The opposition, when they were last in office, copied many policies from the then-Wisconsin government, and the results were devastating for Ontario: cuts to public service, closed hospitals, and labour strife with our teachers, resulting in the loss of 26 million school days.

We cannot allow the mistakes of the past to be repeated again, and I am afraid the current Leader of the Opposition, who has yet to reveal his plan for education in the province, will see what's happening—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member currently making a statement is using this time, which is usually shared in a non-partisan atmosphere, to actually provoke a discussion that you ruled on earlier today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. It's not a point of order, but I do remind all members that this is a time—and I don't necessarily agree with the member from Durham that statements have not been of a political nature on all sides in here, so I will not grant him that. But I do caution all members on drawing analogies between what is happening in other jurisdictions and comparing that to previous things that have happened in this province or might happen in this province. I don't think it's helpful to all of us, and I just remind members to be cognizant of that.

Please continue.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Speaker.

We cannot allow the mistakes of the past to be repeated in this province, and I'm afraid the current Leader of the Opposition, who has yet to reveal his plan for education in the province, will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

JOHN BOICH

Mr. Ted McMeekin: It's with great sadness that I rise today to honour the life of the late John Boich, who tragically passed away last week.

John was a good friend of mine, and a good friend to anyone who believed in democracy and the importance of political engagement. He was a former educator, professional football player and co-chair of the Shape Burlington committee.

On March 2, Arlene and John were informed that he had been voted Burlington's 2011 Citizen of the Year for his hard work in civic engagement, a fitting and long-overdue tribute to this amazing man. John loved his community and had a real heart of gold.

Over the years, I came to see John as a gentle, giant man. A great storyteller, John could keep you spellbound as he spun a tale or two or three at a moment's notice. He always lit up a room with his warmth and humour.

The other side of John was equally appealing. He had the uncanny knack of always finding a way to shear through all the rhetoric and nonsense, while being genuinely helpful in the process. John tended toward seeing the best in people and, once spotted, encouraging everyone to lend expression to their unique giftedness. He mentored many of us.

May we all learn from the wonderful example that John set, and may he rest in peace.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission / Projet de loi 150, Loi prévoyant le règlement des conflits de travail à la Commission de transport de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 3, 2011, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION À L'OBÉSITÉ JUVÉNILE

Mr. Fonseca moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act to proclaim Childhood Obesity Awareness Month / Projet de loi 170, Loi proclamant le Mois de la sensibilisation à l'obésité juvénile.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Obesity continues to be one of the biggest threats to our economy. Childhood obesity is a serious social and economic condition that affects the health of millions of children. It plays a defining role in our children's health.

Proclaiming April as Childhood Obesity Awareness Month supports the work of a group called TransformNation Inc. This group has a vision of conquering childhood obesity and related illnesses within this generation. It's a lofty goal, and I commend them for it. Heightening awareness about childhood obesity will have a significant impact on changing the future by creating a healthier and happier generation of kids. Therefore, this group—and I am very much in support—is pushing to make the month of April Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. This will deliver a message that we want for all our kids: to eat healthier and to participate in exercise.

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MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the House schedule.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 58(b), when the House recesses at the end of the morning sitting on Tuesday, March 29, 2011, it shall stand recessed until 4 p.m., at which time government notice of motion number 55 shall be called.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, during consideration of private members' public business this afternoon, in the event that Bill 155, An Act to proclaim Ukrainian Heritage Day, receives second reading, the order for third reading shall immediately be called and the question put immediately, without debate or amendment; and that, in the event that Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month, receives second reading, the order for third reading shall immediately be called and the question put immediately, without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION WEEK

SEMAINE NATIONALE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT COOPÉRATIF

Hon. John Milloy: Today I invite all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me as we celebrate National Co-operative Education Week, March 21 to 25. This is a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge that co-op programs are an integral part of university and college education across the province.

Co-op education provides in-school theoretical learning with practical on-the-job learning and experience. It benefits employers, students, communities, the province and educational institutions alike.

Co-op placements help forge strong working relationships with employers and provide students with a source of income to help support their post-secondary education. They offer the opportunity to find inspiration and help young people make that important connection between their passion and a future career.

Co-op placements also give students a competitive edge in securing jobs in today's challenging marketplace. Our Open Ontario plan is helping to build the most highly skilled and educated workforce in the world, securing a strong economy for the future.

In Ontario, we have more than 45,000 co-op students, in partnership with 39 colleges and universities across the province. Students are learning key skills and earning great experience in a variety of industries, including finance, electronics, resource and manufacturing.

Ontario has thousands of employers involved in hiring co-op students across the province, companies such as Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., Canadian Tire, CIBC Corporate, Cobalt Pharmaceuticals, Dell Computers, Google, Hillebrand Estates, Hydro One, IBM Canada, Niagara Tourism, Sick Kids hospital, TD Canada Trust, Research in Motion, and the list goes on.

Grâce à ces partenaires importants et à tous les autres, nos étudiantes et étudiants terminent leurs études avec des compétences utiles, prêts à contribuer à la croissance et à la prospérité de notre province.

The government of Ontario strongly supports post-secondary co-operative education. It provides operating grants to institutions that run co-op programs. The Ontario co-operative education tax credit, which we recently expanded, helps employers that hire students enrolled in a co-op education program at an Ontario university or college. The Ontario student assistance program provides support to students, including those in co-op programs. More than $13 million is being invested for 32 co-op diploma apprenticeship projects across the province. This is an increase from just six projects when the program started in 2004-05. The government of Ontario also hires more than 250 co-op students every year.

So, in partnership with the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education and Education at Work Ontario, together with colleges and universities across Canada, we celebrate the success of our co-op students and graduates. I encourage employers and local communities across Ontario to invest in co-op education and consider hiring a student. They can go to the website ewo.ca to find out what post-secondary institutions offer co-op programs in their local area.

Once again, I encourage all members to support National Co-operative Education Week, March 21 to 25.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Jim Wilson: In response to the minister, the PC Party is very supportive of co-operative education here in the province of Ontario. We recognize that our college and university students are the future of our great province, and the PC Party has always sought to enhance employment opportunities that allow young people to lead productive and independent lives.

By combining academic studies and work experience, we know that Ontario's co-operative education programs benefit both students and employers. It gives students real-world experience and market-relevant skills. It makes it easier for students to make the transition from school to the workplace and it helps students earn money to pay for their own education. It also provides real economic benefits to employers and improved partnerships between businesses and educational institutions.

That's why, in 1996, we passed the Tax Credits and Economic Stimulation Act, which brought in the co-operative education tax credit. We did this to restore confidence in Ontario, create jobs and spur economic growth.

This initiative that we created, and that the minister is applauding today, encourages employers to provide more co-op opportunities to meet the demand while also ensuring that students can benefit from more placement opportunities.

But we could be doing even more for co-op students if this government wasn't redirecting hard-earned Ontario tax dollars towards foreign scholarships that are only open to foreign students. Ontario students need not apply.

The McGuinty government's foreign scholarship plan will award lucrative $40,000-per-year scholarships to 300 foreign students while Ontario students get left behind. This is just more evidence of how out of touch Premier McGuinty's government is with the people it serves. This $30-million foreign scholarship giveaway is an affront to Ontario families who are struggling to afford to put their children through college or university.

Just look at what our post-secondary students are faced with. Ontario not only has the highest tuition of any province in Canada; we also have the largest class sizes and the highest student unemployment rate in Canada. Instead of addressing those alarming numbers, Mr. McGuinty finds it easier to ignore the basics and create programs that no Ontario family asked for.

It's also clear that this government has an easier time making new promises rather than delivering on old ones. In 2007, Premier McGuinty promised in the throne

speech to deliver a $300 textbook and technology grant to every full-time college and university student. When I asked the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities last year why the government is only offering half that amount to only a fraction of qualified students, the minister said that because of financial circumstances, the government had to break its promise.

Fast-forward eight months and the minister miraculously found $30 million to give $40,000-per-year foreign scholarships out, yet he can't find the money to pay for his promise to deliver $300 to every Ontario college and university student for their textbook and technology needs.

It's obvious that Premier McGuinty is out of touch with the priorities of Ontario families. By introducing this foreign scholarship program, the government is turning its attention away from tremendous domestic challenges faced by post-secondary institutions.

In 2010-11, Ontario graduate students saw a 10.6% increase in tuition fees and undergrads saw a 5.4% increase. The $6,307 average amount undergraduate students now pay is more than that of any other province. Class sizes in Ontario universities are also the largest in the country, with one professor for every 27 students—15% higher than the rest of Canada. Then there's the average debt of a university graduate last year, totalling $26,680.

It seems that Premier McGuinty has lost all concept of how his grand experiments are affecting Ontario families who are saddled with extraordinary numbers. A woman from Guelph wrote this to me: "My daughter is in third-year university and it has been a financial struggle. She holds two jobs and is a full-time student, and as pensioners we can only help so much. The economy has impacted all of our lives, but we just get slapped with more taxes, such as the HST, so we can all struggle some more."

Mr. McGuinty doesn't seem to realize that families are worried about putting food on the table, paying the hydro bill, paying their rising auto insurance premiums and putting money towards tuition for their children at college or university. All of this has become a real struggle, as the lady from Guelph said.

In closing, I just want to reiterate what the leader of the official opposition, Tim Hudak, has said: that we will take all of that $30 million that the government is giving away to foreign students only—again, no Ontario student need apply for those scholarships—and we will reinvest that money into programs like co-operative education, which is a success and which is something that we began with our tax credit to encourage, in a big way, employers in 1996.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to admit that usually the announcements that are made by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities are an opportunity for me to attack his government—usually, but not today. I think today's announcement is a good announcement, something that New Democrats want to share with all the people who work in the co-operative education sector, and the minister, in this regard.

The minister says it quite correctly:

"This is a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge that co-op programs are an integral part of university and college education across the province.

"Co-op education provides in-school theoretical learning with practical, on-the-job learning and experience."

This is something that is valuable to students and it doesn't matter where they are. The more of these opportunities we offer students, the better.

I often believe that there is too much theory in what students who have gone to university study and very little practical experience in the field, whatever field that is. I think if people had an opportunity to be in the field, they would know or discover whether or not they would actually like to be in the very field they're studying. The co-op experience gives them that opportunity to understand whether they like something or not, or to be able to move on into a different field. It's a good experience.

At the high school level, I often think that students are the ones who have to find the co-op experience, and in that regard it's a serious weakness, I have to say. We should be doing more at the school level and as a government, where we actually create an employment office so that we seek employers out, rather than forcing students to find employment opportunities. At that level, it's a weakness that I think should be remedied.

There have been concerns at the university level that have been raised by some, which I want to raise with the minister and something that he might want to consider. One of the questions that someone has raised is the following: Trying to get co-op students covered by the Employment Standards Act is something that some are seeking, but so far there has been very little movement on it. At some point, maybe the minister might want to comment on that.

And what does the Employment Standards Act deal with? It deals with a whole lot of issues connected to holiday pay, vacation, severance, exploitation of workers, wages, and if they're free of potential reprisals if they have a concern with an employer. That's something to look at and I think it's worthy of some study.

The other point that some have made is that they would like to try to get incentives for not-for-profit organizations to hire co-op students. I think it's a valid point. It would be good to get co-op students to have an opportunity to be in the not-for-profit sector and to understand what value some of those organizations have. I think we have 4,000 organizations in the not-for-profit sector. That would be something worthwhile by way of enhancements to that sector so the students can get there.

The other point that has been raised that I think has value is trying to get funding support for hiring of co-op students with disabilities. That too is something we should be looking at as a government. It has merit. I support that.

I wanted to raise those issues for the minister and his government to review in the future.

As it relates to this announcement, it's a good announcement today, and New Democrats want to support National Co-operative Education Week.

PETITIONS

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present petitions from my riding of Durham, which read as follows:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive" these treatments when necessary and where necessary as soon as possible.

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Cherechi, one of the pages.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I keep receiving petitions about judges in Ontario.

"To the Parliament of Ontario and the Attorney General:

"Whereas the Canadian Judicial Council has been asked by Ontario's Attorney General to probe the judicial behaviour of judges; and

"Whereas judges are human beings and have been known to make serious mistakes in the judicial system, leading to devastating consequences and unfair justice for Canadian citizens; and

"Whereas some judges are known to have fallen asleep in the midst of a trial"—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It happens in this Legislature from time to time.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: If I can just get your undivided attention, please, that would be great.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please read the petition.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: —"in the midst of a trial, have been observed making biased, disrespectful comments, and abused their judicial powers; and

"Whereas Canadian families need to be protected from these judges who are unable to change their habits, unable to follow the rule of proper conduct and unable to exercise recommendations set by the Court of Appeal, and consequently commit grave injustices;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, are strongly requesting the following changes in our judicial system:

"(1) That a 'judicial demerit point system' be applied to ensure that judges are accountable for their judgments rendered;

"(2) That a yearly review of their performance be established by the Canadian Judicial Council."

I am giving my assent to this petition.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have a petition from numerous people on the west side of my riding, in Concord West, Brownridge, Glen Shields and surrounding communities.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario and GO/Metrolinx are currently proposing the construction of a GO/Metrolinx intermodal station hub and parking lot on crown land (land registry PIN number 032320650) owned by the Ontario Realty Corp., land which adjoins to the east of the Concord West community in the city of Vaughan and has been in the community's traditional green space; and

"Whereas the land in question is ecologically sensitive and demonstrably part of the Bartley Smith Greenway; and

"Whereas safe access to this land and the said greenway by the Concord West community residents and seniors is needed from Rockview Gardens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government transfer the subject land from the Ontario Realty Corp. to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it and give it to my friend Fatemah, a page from Thornhill.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

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"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I send that down with Emma to the clerks' table.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic ... in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

"Whereas this expansion will make this" a very busy diesel rail corridor; and

"Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health ...; and

"Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

"Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

"Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge the Legislature of Ontario to take action with respect to the immediate electrification of the Georgetown South rail corridor, including the air-rail link...."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition as well.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and" indeed "a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are" established, "clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent" further "contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to Daniel, one of the new pages here.

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I do have one more petition to the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for senior citizens. It reads as follows:

"Whereas seniors who are disabled and/or ill are presently suffering at home; and

"Whereas the cost of a caregiver on a monthly basis who looks after a senior in their own home is around $1,200, including room and board; and

"Whereas the cost of taking care of someone at home is at least 10 times less than the cost of a hospital bed; and

"Whereas most seniors with disabilities and/or illness are crowding an already overburdened health care system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly request that a basic government subsidy be established (based on a doctor's evaluation) which will pay at least a minimum allowance for a caregiver.

"Seniors deserve to live at home as long and as independently as possible."

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, I'm enthusiastic about this petition. I'm signing it right now and giving it to Riley.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township:

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found $12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government have continued to ignore farmers and have slashed support to farmers by over $145 million in 2010 alone; and

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers" who donate surplus food to food banks "to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario continue to struggle to feed those in need; and

"Whereas, if the McGuinty Liberals truly support farm families and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately" call and "pass MPP Bob Bailey's Bill 78;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call ... Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and send it down with Emma.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: Another petition from my riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now."

I'm pleased to sign this in support and send it with Madelaine, one of the pages.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

UKRAINIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE UKRAINIEN

Mr. Martiniuk moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to proclaim Ukrainian Heritage Day / Projet de loi 155, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine ukrainien.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I dedicate this bill to my parents, Timko and Helen Martiniuk, maiden name Kalapaca. As all their children are present in this chamber today, I can say how proud we are of our parents and their Ukrainian heritage.

I'm honoured to introduce this bill with the support of my colleague and friend from Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette, and my co-sponsors, my friend of many years, Donna Cansfield, member for Etobicoke Centre and a Canadian of Ukrainian descent, and Cheri DiNovo, member for the riding of Parkdale–High Park, a riding in which my family resided and lived for decades. This bill would see September 7 in each year proclaimed as Ukrainian Heritage Day.

The first official Ukrainian heritage immigrants, Vasyl Eleniak and Ivan Pylypiw, arrived in Canada on September 7, 1891. Soon afterwards, Ukrainian immigrants began arriving in Ontario in large numbers. Today, Ontario is home to more than 336,000 Ukrainian Canadians. There are more than 1.2 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent across the country.

I have the honour of introducing a number of people who are present with us today who I feel should be recognized, because each of those persons, whether I name them specifically or not—the organizations and those persons have made this bill possible. Hopefully, it will pass later today second and third readings and become law.

Firstly, I neglected to introduce my friends from Oakville, Robert and Sandy Zacharczuk, who are here as my guests.

1350

Secondly, I'm honoured to greet the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Ontario Provincial Council, and its president, Yvan Baker. That council and Yvan helped considerably with the drafting of this bill, and I thank them for that.

Present is the United Nations Association in Canada, Toronto branch representative Georgina Bencsik; also, the Canadian Lemko Association representative, Andrzej Rotko; the Ukrainian National Federation of Canada director, Yurij Serhijczuk; the League of Ukrainian Canadians president, Oleh Romanyshyn; the Canadian Friends of Ukraine, including the former MP and MPP Yuri Shymko, and the president, Margareta Shpir; Ukrainian Youth Association of Canada members Andrea Kardasz, John Koshyk and Harry Nezmasznyj; the Yavir School of Ukrainian Dance, including school administrator Marusia Perun; the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Toronto branch, including the president, Oksana Rewa; the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce, including the president, Zenon Potichny; Desna Ukrainian Dance Company representative Alexander Czoli; the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, St. Catharines branch, including members Maryann Kobzan and Alexandra Sawchuk; St. Vladimir Institute, including the president, Paul Strathdee; the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society, including the president, Eugene Duvalko; the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Resource Centre chair, Lisa Shymko; the League of Ukrainian Canadian Women, including the president, Chrystyna Bidiak; and the Rt. Rev. Bohdan Bilinsky, chancellor of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Toronto.

Canada is a nation that has rightly been characterized as the pre-eminent multicultural country of the world, beginning from the very foundation of our great country.

On September 7, 1891, immigrants from the Ukraine began to arrive in Canada to write their own unique chapter in our nation's history. At the end of the 19th century, few in Canada had ever heard of Ukraine, for at that time an independent Ukraine statehood, free from ravaging colonial domination that was Ukraine's historic national tragedy, was still an elusive and future ideal. But the people of Ukraine have always known who they were.

The name Ukraine comes from the Slavic word meaning "to cut or slice." Living on the rich, fertile black soil of the steppes north of the Black Sea, the people native to the land were in constant conflict with invaders who were forever trying to take it from them. Since their land was constantly cut out and won back from the territories controlled by dominating nations, the name Ukraine became popular by the people of the chernozem or black earth.

This relationship to the land is also reflected today in the colours of the flag of national liberation: red over black, where black represents the black soil, and the red the blood of the people spilled on it for the sake of freedom and self-determination.

The tremendous importance of this relationship to the land in Ukrainian history is what gave shape to the Ukrainian immigration to Canada. It was the promise of more agricultural land that led Ukrainians like Vasyl Eleniak and Ivan Pylypiw to come to Canada on September 7, 1891. So began the first and most populous wave of Ukrainian immigration to Canada, which ended with the First World War and the arrival of 170,000 Ukrainians. Some 68,000 arrived during the second wave, from 1922-39, and about 40,000 for the third wave, from 1946-61. A fourth wave of Ukrainian immigration is currently under way, beginning in the early 1990s.

Since the Second World War, Ukrainians have tended to move to southern Ontario and Quebec. There are today more Ukrainians in Ontario than any other individual province in Canada; that is, 400,000.

Although separated physically from their ancestral homeland, Ukrainian Canadians maintained strong spiritual ties with it in their ongoing maintenance and development of their culture. Ukrainian Canadians have created institutions that showcase their culture, such as the Shumka troop, the world's elite Ukrainian dancers, and the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, which highlights the pioneer era of their forefathers. The world's largest Ukrainian egg was erected in Vegreville, Alberta, in 1974, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Ukrainian Canadians have also contributed to the culture as a whole. We all know and love actress and comedienne Luba Goy of the Royal Canadian Air Farce, singer Chantal Kreviazuk and painter William Kurelek.

In 1944, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress came into being, and that united the various social, cultural and political organizations of the Ukrainian community and spoke on their behalf with a single voice. The congress continues to serve the Ukrainian Canadian community with distinction, and I again welcome congress representatives to the House today.

Ukrainian Canadian scholars such as Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk have dedicated their lives to civil liberties and have paid particular attention to the study of the Holodomor, the man-made famine and genocide of Joseph Stalin that killed up to 10 million Ukrainians at the height of its terror in 1933. I am proud to say that both Ontario and Canada have officially recognized the Holodomor genocide and have formally established Holodomor Memorial Day, the fourth Saturday of November in each year, as a Canada-wide observance.

The Ukrainians have had more influence in Canadian society and politics than any other eastern European group. The late Ray Hnatyshyn was the first Governor General of Ukrainian descent. His personal coat of arms, which is on the certificate that created the arms for the Ontario Legislature building, which hangs before the grand staircase, bears the Canadian heraldic lion rendered in Ukrainian blue and yellow colours.

Other Ukrainian Canadian political figures include Gary Filmon, Premier of Manitoba; Roy Romanow, Premier of Saskatchewan; and Ed Stelmach, Premier of Alberta. Here in Ontario—unfortunately Steve had a prior commitment, but our Speaker, the Honourable Steve

Peters, is the first Ukrainian Canadian Speaker of our province. Our Speaker's family ties have a rich and long history that are woven into the very fabric of the Canadian mosaic, and I think I speak on behalf of all members when I say how proud we are of him.

My time is up and I have not completed, so I will continue speaking in a few minutes, once we do the rotation. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1400

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A couple of things before I make some remarks: First, the member from Parkdale–High Park, who co-sponsored this bill, regrets not being able to be here to speak to it; she's out of the country, and I did want to say that for the record. But she would have been, I suspect, a better speaker than Marchese on this particular subject.

Secondly, I wanted to say to Georgina Bencsik that I did introduce you earlier on, for the record. She's here today. And I want to welcome so many other Ukrainian-Canadians who are here to witness this debate and to witness our support for the bill.

The member from Cambridge gave a very good historical view of the Ukrainian community, in terms of where they came from and where they've gone, and commented on many of the successes of many Ukrainian-Canadians. I thought I would just touch on some of my personal history to Ukrainian Canadians.

Most of my life has been south of Bloor Street. I have mentioned this from time to time, and I say this with pride. I know that people kid me about not going too far beyond Bloor Street, but I have also stated that I moved to Lawrence and Bathurst, and I have done that successfully. I was a bit worried about my ability to be able to do that, but I've done it.

But having lived south of Bloor, I want to tell you where I went by way of high school, and that was Harbord Collegiate. At Harbord Collegiate, just west of Bathurst, we had a variety of different immigrant groups, and I think one of the largest groups at that time, in 1966, 1967, 1968, was the Ukrainian community, because they were one of the larger groups in my riding, including Polish Canadians, including Jewish folks who were in my riding—predominant before the Italians got there in 1956. We had many Greek Canadians, many Portuguese Canadians and now, predominantly, Chinese Canadians. It's an incredible mix of people, and this is where I met many of my Ukrainian friends at the time. One of my closer friends that I later met as a teacher was Ray Zaremba. It was fascinating to have met him as a teacher, because I never thought that was the profession he wanted. But he became a physical education teacher and is quite happy to have done that.

My other connection to the Ukrainian community was as a soccer player. I played soccer in high school, and many of the players were Ukrainian. One of my closest friends there was Stephan, and it was through him that I ended up joining the Ukrainian soccer team, if you can believe that. I was the only Italian-Canadian on the team. I dare say I was the shortest member of the team, but clearly, they must have liked my ability. I was a defenceman. I wish that I could be as tall as some of the Ukrainian Canadians, because I would have been a great defenceman. But as it was, I did well and met many of the Ukrainian community and remember memorably one of the games we had in Rochester. I've never forgotten that game. We won it. I was happy; they were happy. It was a great day, and it was at that game—I believe it was at that game—that I learned the expression "jty dodomu." I'm not sure it's pronounced correctly, but it means "go home." That's the only expression I learned.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Is that what they told you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it leads one to conclude that that's what they might have told me. That's not the case. But that's my experience with the Ukrainian community.

I want to tell you that the political representative in my riding during my high school years was John Yaremko, from the riding of Bellwoods. I was a high school student while he was still a provincial member. He retired in 1975. I was still not politically active yet. Little did I know that one day I might represent the same riding as John Yaremko. The boundaries have changed, of course, but—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: You learned how to run playing soccer.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right, right. But it's true. Running is part of the fun that I like to do. That's why I hate golf. Just standing in one little spot playing golf: That's not my game—I've said this before—but that's a different matter.

The point about Harbord Collegiate is that it was a school full of different communities. This country, like Harbord Collegiate, is a country of immigrants, and I am profoundly proud of the fact that we have many different communities—something that distinguishes us from many other countries in the world. I'm happy to say that most of us mix with other people and end up marrying individuals from different communities, which creates an incredible country that I speak of quite frequently as something one should be proud of. Mixing with other communities is a beautiful thing, and it does create one better race overall.

So to the Ukrainian community that's here, congratulations on your past, on the present successes many of you have achieved, and on your contributions to this great society. We welcome you here, and we, as New Democrats that are here, will be supporting this bill with great enthusiasm. Congratulations to the individuals who introduced this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to share my time with my colleague from Davenport. Also, before I speak, I want to let you know that the Honourable Jim Bradley, who is unable to be with us today, wants to identify his full support for Bill 155. Unfortunately, he's at a funeral, and I know that all our hearts and

our prayers are with the families of the firefighters this afternoon.

I am absolutely thrilled to be able to stand for a multitude of reasons, obviously as a Canadian Ukrainian, but also because—I didn't realize the member was going to have the bill in honour of his parents, but I have to admit that they were like my second parents. So this is, in particular, very special for me, and I thank you for the opportunity to share this, also with Cheri DiNovo.

As I hear about the history of Canadian Ukrainians and think about how difficult it must have been for someone to leave their country, their traditions, their food, their family, and travel across the ocean, land in Pier 21 or whatever it was called at the time and then travel to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario—wherever it might be—to me it is almost unfathomable. How do you do that? And yet they did, and aren't we grateful that they did.

You heard about one of the first: Vasyl. What we also know is that he was one of the first Ukrainians to receive an honorary Canadian citizenship in 1947 by the Supreme Court of Canada. The first member, of course, was William Lyon Mackenzie King, our Prime Minister of the day. But it spoke to his hard work, his tenacity and the fact that he had become an extraordinarily successful person by emigrating to Canada.

What's important as well is that we recognize the footprint left behind by these individuals and the influence and impact they have had on our lives for so many years. I would like to share a few of those with you. Ever been to an IMAX theatre? Guess what? One of the co-inventors was Ukrainian. Ever used a garbage bag? Guess what? A Ukrainian invented that garbage bag. Union Carbide took it over and called it the Glad bag, but actually it was invented by a fellow called Harry Wasylyk. He was the Canadian inventor. Harry Messel was a Canadian-born Ukrainian who went to Australia as a nuclear physicist and started the whole Science Schools project in Australia.

The literary work of Ukrainians has influenced our work here in Canada, and I'd just like to share this comment with you, because I found it fascinating how we forget about the impact of what happens with someone comes, for example, with their writing: "Because of its long history, richness, scope and diversity, Ukrainian writing in Canada offers much that is of interest to the scholar. It provides a brightly contrasting thread within the broad fabric of Canadian literature, and forms one of the most dynamic and expansive literary subcultures outside of English and French writing." Not only did they have their own literary society; they impacted and affected Canadian society, French society, all societies in terms of their writing, which made the other writing richer for being a part of it.

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It's important also to recognize that we have had people who have come to this country and set up places such as the Shevchenko Foundation, and the work that it has done throughout the years.

It's important to recognize as well that there still is work that is ongoing here within, and I give great credit to—and I know there's a guest here today, Irene Fedewicz from the Holodomor education committee. The work continues and is ongoing. They work through with our ministry, the Ministry of Education.

I'd like to acknowledge also Peter Kardash and Peter Tschenka of the League of Ukrainian Canadians in Etobicoke.

Here we are today, richer for these folks who have been here, for them coming in the first place and having the endurance, the tenacity and the willingness to create a new life with their families.

I had, this afternoon, the pleasure of sitting down and having lunch with my husband's ninth cousin. He found my husband through going through all of his ancestry—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Ninth?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Ninth. I thought to myself, "I just have to go home to Alberta and I can find all sorts of cousins in a heartbeat." That's how inter-knit that community is. Aren't we fortunate for it?

If you think about the food, the music—who hasn't been to see one of these dance troupes and thought, "Wow, aren't they incredible?" Who hasn't had a perogy or a pedaheh in their life? Chicken on a stick, long before it was called satay, was part of the Ukrainian culture. And guess what? It's now part of ours.

We have so much to be thankful for and so many people to say thanks to. I've mentioned some of them, but there are also those—I think of Jim Temerty. He has started Northland Power, but it's not just another company; it's in renewable energy. So the entrepreneurial spirit that came with the first settlers hasn't gone away. It's here within the fabric of this society and continues constantly, whether it's the richness through the culture or the richness through the business acumen that they have inherited from their ancestors.

Am I proud to have a little Ukrainian in me? Absolutely. I can make my holubtsi and really enjoy it, and I also am able to say with pride that the people who have come before me have indeed left an incredible legacy on which to draw.

In particular, and I say this—Rosario's around the corner. This is for Gina, right?

Thanks, Gerry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm sharing my time with my colleague the member for Oshawa, and I'll just complete shortly my talk.

The great religious traditions of the Ukrainian people—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): A point of order: Stop the clock for a moment.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: There are six minutes left, and we had arranged—Mrs. Cansfield said that she would give me six of her minutes and suddenly, Mr. Martiniuk was recognized. So I'm just wondering—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member is allowed to use part of his party's 12-minute time frame, which he's doing. Does he have his full time?

The honourable member from Cambridge.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: The great religious traditions of the Ukrainian people have made an equally important impact on Canadian life. The golden domes of the Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox churches frame the skylines of many cities across Ontario and Canada.

Here in Toronto, at the Saint Demetrius Ukrainian Catholic parish, there is a mural dedicated to our martyr, Blessed Emil Kowch, who was killed in a Nazi death camp for his work to protect Jews who came to him for help. His surviving daughter is often seen standing quietly beside her father's mural.

The Ukrainian Canadian community is today one of the most vibrant, colourful and integral aspects of the Canadian cultural mosaic. Its festivals and celebrations are attended and enjoyed by all Canadians who embrace the Kozak people of the black earth as they are embraced by them.

Canada has the honour of being the first country to acknowledge Ukraine's independent statehood, and in doing so, Canada was saying thank you to the many historic and ongoing contributions of Canadian Ukrainian people to their Canadian homeland.

I call on all honourable members today to join me in saying thank you to our Ukrainian Canadian community and in voting later today on proclaiming September 7 of each year as Ukrainian Heritage Day.

I should just say before my colleague takes over that there are two more bills to be heard after this bill, and the voting does not take place until sometime around 4 o'clock, which is quite a ways to go yet. I would invite any persons present to attend the reception in committee room 2—that includes members, of course, and members of the audience—for some light refreshment while we wait.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Again, we'll go in rotation. Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Certainly, we want to congratulate Mr. Martiniuk, Mrs. Cansfield and Ms. DiNovo for introducing Bill 155, the Ukrainian Heritage Day Act, 2011. Of course, we're going to, hopefully, unanimously support this bill.

A special welcome goes to Mr. Yuri Shymko, who has been, as you know, a very famous MPP for many years. The reason I mention his name specifically is because I remember, on a personal basis, how many times together with him—and sometimes separately from him because of our party differences—we met with Ukrainian Canadians.

My first campaign manager was Ukrainian Canadian. I won and I kept on winning because we have very close ties with Ukrainian Canadians. But with Yuri—we were here on a number of occasions, but what I remember most is the raising of the Ukrainian national colours, because in those days, there was the Soviet Union. In those days, Ukrainians did not taste freedom and liberty. So when we saw the flag, the Ukrainian colours, go up at city hall—that's how we first started—I looked around and I looked into the faces of Ukrainian Canadians and into their eyes, and I saw tears coming down, streaming down their cheeks, because they remember what they had left behind. They left behind their country. They left behind their families. They left behind their houses and their livestock. They left behind, really, a bit of themselves.

Could they ever go back? Ukrainians could never go back because it was dominated, at that time, by the Soviet Union.

Looking into their eyes gave me great inspiration and a great feeling for what they went through. Many times, Ukrainian Canadians were the leaders of those people who wanted to do away with the Iron Curtain. There were many times that they came before the Legislature. They were called black ribbon days, and, of course, the whole idea of those days was to present a view of Ukrainian Canadians to those who were in the Ukraine that they had someone here who they could rely on, they had someone here who could speak out for them because they could not speak. This great relationship—I understood somehow on a visceral basis what happens to a whole nation, what happens to a whole people when they are imprisoned, when they are in a situation where they cannot speak, where they cannot have freedom of conscience and they certainly can't express themselves. Here in Canada, of course, we became their voice.

Yuri, I want to thank you especially because you were one of the major people here in this Legislature who reminded us almost on a daily basis of what we almost forgot: the kinds of liberties that we can enjoy and the kinds of religious freedoms that we can have on a daily basis.

It is very important to understand that for the first time—actually, in 1987—we made a special proclamation here. I was minister of multiculturalism at the time and the Premier was David Peterson. We had the whole Ukrainian community here. We proclaimed the independence day of Ukraine at that time. How proud we were and how proud they were. What we said was this:

"Whereas the province of Ontario and the nation of Canada have prospered through" their courage …; and

"Whereas we especially value the many important contributions that our citizens of Ukrainian heritage have made to our province and country since they first arrived in the 1890s; and

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"Whereas a free, independent, democratic Ukrainian state was established 69 years ago on January 22, 1918"—that was then; and

"Whereas the observance of this anniversary fosters within us a deeper appreciation of freedom, liberty and democratic ideals;

"Therefore, on behalf of the government of Ontario, we are pleased to recognize that"—in those days—"January 22, 1987, as Ukrainian Independence Day and commend its observance to the people of our province."

Those were moments that reverberated across the whole world because we, in Ontario, for some strange reason—and some are here in this Legislature of Ontario—understood as Ontarians what they went through, what they felt and how free they wanted to become. They couldn't speak because many of them were in jails and many of them died for wanting to become independent. It is important to recognize how what we do in this place, how we speak in this place is, indeed, an important occasion.

I am reminded of the book called Toronto's Many Faces. I'm not going to tell you who the author is of Toronto's Many Faces.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Who's the author?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Well, it's Tony Ruprecht. Thank you very much.

The first paragraph in this book says, "Throughout Toronto, parks, monuments, and the brilliant cupolas and domes of Ukrainian churches reflect Ukrainian culture and tradition in the city. A statue of St. Volodymyr was erected in front of St. Vladimir Institute to mark the 1988 millennium of Christianity in Ukraine. Dedicated to freedom, a beautiful monument to the poetess Lesya Ukrainka is found in High Park, while the bravery of Ukrainian Canadian soldiers who fought in four wars is commemorated by the Ukrainian Canadian Memorial Park at Scarlett Road and Eglinton Avenue West."

In short, we want to thank our Ukrainian Canadian friends for being here and for helping us to celebrate not only on your behalf but on behalf of all Ontarians this special day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Just before I begin, I would like to acknowledge a couple of individuals who are in attendance here as well.

First of all, Mr. Walter Kish: Aside from the Canadian Ukrainian Federation, he's also on the board of directors for the Ukrainian Credit Union, as well as the board of directors for the New Pathway newspaper. As a matter of fact, this individual spent two years in the Ukraine—I think it was 2004 and 2006—helping them strengthen their credit union.

Not only that, I'd also like to recognize a good friend of mine, Reverend Father Bohdan Hladio, who has joined us as well on behalf of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada from St. John's Orthodox Church in Oshawa.

I must admit, though, I've spent some time with Father Hladio for his 25th wedding anniversary, as well as coffee in his front room and on a regular occasion attending the blessing of the icons. I must say, Father, yes, I have your tapes. They're very good and I'll be sure to get them back to you next week.

I should give a bit of background. As a person with a name like Ouellette, l'histoire de ma famille remonte aussi loin que le deuxième bateau venu de France.

For our Ukrainian friends here, that would mean that with a name like Ouellette, the history of my family goes back to 1604 to the second boat from France from Normandy.

As well, my father's mother's parents were Scottish, a Dewar, and Irish as well, an O'Neill. Now, ma mère on my father's father's side was First Nation. The Ukrainian part comes in with my mother. My mother's parents were Polish and, of course, Baba was Ukrainian. As I regularly say, that makes me Scottish, Irish, French, First Nation, Polish and Ukrainian and, just like everybody else here, Canadian. As I regularly say, love your country of origin but love Canada better.

I should give a little bit of background. Baba was born on September 27, 1901, in the Ukrainian town of Chlewczany. On December 16, she got on a boat in Copenhagen, where she came across—for nine days—on the Oscar II, and on Christmas Eve, December 24, she landed at Pier 21 in Halifax, just like many other Ukrainians coming to Canada—the famous Pier 21 in Halifax that brought so many immigrants to our country.

Baba had two brothers and two sisters. One brother had immigrated to Canada prior to her; he ended up in Alberta. His sister came afterwards and also ended up in Alberta.

When Baba came, she was supposed to go to Saskatchewan. Like many of the immigrants who came in, she was supposed to be for domestic help. When she got off the boat in Halifax, there were a large number of individuals there recruiting domestics to come and work all across Canada. So when she got on the train to head to Saskatchewan with her one bundle of clothes tied up in a sheet, she got off in Montreal, where she spent four years and where she eventually met my grandfather, whom I called Gigi. She arrived in 1927 and was married four years after that, eventually coming to our community of Oshawa.

There are a large number of other famous Ukrainians who should be mentioned as well. The members here and the attendees would know Bill Barilko, Dave Andreychuk, Mike Bossy and Johnny Bucyk. Many may not know that Ernie Eves has a Ukrainian heritage as well, or Dale Hawerchuk, Alex Trebek, Roberta Bondar, and of course The Great One, Wayne Gretzky—all individuals who have a strong Ukrainian background.

You see, the Ukrainian background—how shall I say this? [*Remarks in Ukrainian*]—which means "my friend"—from Cambridge mentioned the agricultural background. The Ukraine was the breadbasket of Europe. The reason for that, which most people don't realize, is that the topsoil—how many know that the topsoil in the Ukraine is from 60 to 80 feet deep? Can you imagine that? We've got a couple of feet in good places in Ontario, but you've got 60 to 80 feet of topsoil in the Ukraine.

These individuals came to Canada. Baba was supposed to go to Saskatchewan; she ended up in Montreal, and she eventually came to Oshawa and settled down there.

We have a number of other individuals of Ukrainian descent from Oshawa who have historic, famous back-

grounds, such as the famous Michael Starchewsky. Michael changed his name later on. He was born of Ukrainian immigrant parents in the mining town of Copper Cliff, in northern Ontario. He later changed his name to Michael Starr.

For those who don't know, Michael Starr was elected in 1944 as an alderman, and in 1949 became the mayor of the city of Oshawa—Oshawa's first Ukrainian mayor. Not only that, but in 1952, he ran as a Progressive Conservative in a by-election in Oshawa and became an MP in Parliament. Later on, in 1957, Michael Starr, under the John Diefenbaker government, was appointed the Minister of Labour, the first Canadian of Ukrainian origin to achieve a cabinet post.

He also brought forward—and many people may not realize this—the winter works program. My colleagues to my left might be very interested to know that Michael Starr was also responsible for the introduction of the first minimum wage legislation in Canada. Not only that, but Michael Starr also was responsible for the creation of the vocational or community college system found throughout Canada.

He was very active in the Ukrainian community—very proud of it, as a matter of fact. He was the head of the St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Orthodox Church parish council in Oshawa, and was one of the founders and the first president of the local Ukrainian Professional and Business Men's Club.

These are just some of the individuals and the history that they have had within our community. This goes long and far. As I've mentioned, Pier 21 has a long history of bringing immigrants to Canada.

I mentioned Mr. Kish, who's giving back to the Ukraine, but there are many other programs that have taken place and have not been mentioned. For example, in 1991, I believe it was, through a joint agreement with the Ukraine on the centennial of the first Ukrainian coming to Canada, we brought forward a joint partnership arrangement whereby Ukrainian students participated in a Ukrainian parliamentary program. I had the pleasure to participate in 1998 and 1999, having a Ukrainian student coming to Canada to learn the parliamentary process here in Canada and taking that expertise back to the Ukraine, to share that with so many other parliamentarians around the world.

Oshawa has a long and proud history. We're listed as Canada's 15th-largest Ukrainian community. Not only that, but we have a number of Ukrainian halls and facilities: Odesa, which Father Hladio would know very well because that's his parish hall; Lviv Hall; and, as well, Dnipro Hall.

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One of the founders of Dnipro Hall is my uncle, Uncle Peter Kurylo. Uncle Pete is now 95 years old, and here is just a typical Ukrainian Canadian coming to Canada: an individual who worked at General Motors, never complained, loved his work, loved the opportunity to be here. For over 30 years he never missed a day of work in his entire life in Canada, and that's just typical of the Ukrainian community contributing back to Canada. Not only that; he never visited the hospital until he was 92 years old. He's there now, and we're wishing him all the best that we can—a very proud and strong Canadian heritage coming from the Ukraine and giving back to our community. These are just some of the examples of the individuals who've made such a difference in our communities and my own community.

In the time remaining, I'm going to mention one story about Baba, whose maiden name was Matrona Jaremkowicz. As a young boy, I can recall my mom sending me down to the milkman—for those who remember the milkman. I went down to the milkman with the money in my hand and I asked for smetana. The milkman looked at me and said, "Smetana? What's that?" I looked at him and said, "Well, you know, it's the white stuff," and he said, "What is that?" And I said, "You eat it." He said, "What do you eat it with?" And I looked at him and said, "Petahe." And he looked at me and he said, "What is petahe?"

So lo and behold, here's a little guy going back up to the house with the milkman to explain about sour cream and perogies to the milkman so we could get her some smetana.

We're all extremely proud of our heritage, and I certainly hope we get the support of the House in passing this legislation. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Listening to all of these great speeches today, I have to say I had no idea that so many members of this House had Ukrainian heritage, but I should have known. I should have known by the passion with which they bring to this House the things they have to say.

We are here today to celebrate—and to support this bill, I'm sure—all things Ukrainian in terms of making the people of Ontario understand the enormous contributions that have been made by the people formerly from the Ukraine, but who now call Canada their home.

As has been said, we have an amazing mosaic of people from all over the world. From amongst the first and largest groups that were non-First Nations, non-English or Irish or French to actually arrive in this country were the Ukrainians, and they were extremely successful, as you have heard, travelling from one end of the country to the other. As a person who worked in immigration for more than 20 years before I became a politician, we met people who came from all over the world, but we also knew the history of this country and the great migrations that took place around 1900, when people primarily from the Ukraine and from eastern Europe—but mostly the Ukraine—were brought over by the-then immigration minister, Clifford Sifton.

That was the heyday of immigration to Canada. As many as 500,000 or 600,000 people came in a single year for years and years and years to populate the west, and indeed to come to Ontario. We remember with great fondness how most of western Canada was built on the

backs of labour of people from the Ukraine, and how successful they were, coming to a very harsh climate. We saw pictures when I worked in immigration of those first people who arrived, wearing rough clothes, living often in substandard conditions, their first winter or two in a frigid climate of 20 and 30 and 40 below zero, and the success that they made.

When they came here they brought enormous and wonderful traditions that everybody has spoken about here today, traditions we have all come to enjoy. Even somebody like me from Toronto has come to enjoy them as I travel around this great country, and even travel around this great city, particularly in the west end, when you see the magnificence of the churches. You see the inside, you see the dome, you see the intricate art, the iconography; you see the traditions that are great.

I love all of those things, but I have to tell you, what I love even more than all of those things is the food and the dance of the Ukrainian community. When I was a much younger fellow there used to be a thing called Caravan, and everybody in Toronto used to love to go to Caravan. You could literally travel around the world, which wasn't known to us as well as it is today, and you could sample the cuisine, the culture, the dance and the music. You could go from one place to another, usually two or three in a single night, and you could go to 20 or 30 of them with your passport. But you know, everybody wanted to go to the Ukrainian pavilion; it was number one. It didn't matter what other ones you saw; you had to see that one. If you didn't see that one, you had not really experienced Caravan.

I remember going to that and being blown away by the dancers, blown away with the energy and the sheer force with which they were able to dance these intricate and wonderful steps. They kept going and going and going. I think that's what impresses me most to this very day about the Ukrainian community, because you're all like that. You just keep going and going and going, and you're so very good at what you do.

I also remember eating the wonderful food. I'm a great devotee of holubtsi. They make them in many countries. I've had them from the Hungarian community. I've had them made in many places. I hope my Hungarian friends won't mind, but I really have never tasted any quite as good as those that are made by this community. They are undeniably the best.

So today we are here to recognize one of our oldest ethnocultural groups. We are here to recognize the enormous contribution you have made to this province and to this country, and the success you have passed down through generations to your children. You need to be very proud of yourselves, as we are of you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Cambridge has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: First, I'd like to thank my co-sponsors, Donna Cansfield and Cheri DiNovo. I'd like to thank each of the speakers who spoke in support of the Ukrainian Heritage Day Act: Tony Ruprecht, the member for Davenport; Michael Prue, the member for Beaches–East York; my good friend Jerry Ouellette, the member for Oshawa; and Rosario Marchese, the member for Trinity–Spadina. In addition, I'd like to thank all individuals in the audience who took time out of their very busy lives, I'm sure, to come here today to support the passage of this bill. I congratulate you for the caring you have shown.

Again, I will repeat an invitation to all members of the House to attend, on the first floor, in the west wing, room 2. We will have a reception; I will be there, along with my co-sponsor and any other members who would like to attend. You're all invited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This concludes the time for Mr. Martiniuk's ballot item. We will vote on this item in about 100 minutes.

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION AU DIABÈTE

Mrs. Mangat moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to proclaim the month of November Diabetes Awareness Month / Projet de loi 162, Loi proclamant le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au diabète.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Today, once again, I bring forward Bill 162, the Diabetes Awareness Month Act, which I believe will raise awareness about the serious nature of the disease known as diabetes.

Living with diabetes is not easy. In many cases, people must take insulin injections every day, which makes dramatic changes to their lifestyle. The serious nature of the disease doesn't affect only those who have it; their families and society as a whole are also affected.

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In 2008, when I first moved Bill 113, the Diabetes Awareness Month Act, about 900,000 Ontarians had been diagnosed with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. In 2010, that number rose to about 1.2 million.

Diabetes and its complications cost the health care system over $5 billion a year. This economic burden is expected to increase by 42% over the next decade. Complications resulting from diabetes can lead to heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and blindness. In extreme cases, diabetes can even result in the amputation of limbs.

There are two main types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is typically diagnosed in childhood or early adolescence. Type 2 diabetes generally develops in adults over the age of 40, but an increasing number of children are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Diabetes has a high rate of incidence among aboriginals, Hispanics, South Asians,

Asians and African-Canadians, and the 50-plus age group and lower-income families. Ontario has been working with stakeholders to provide programs, services and tools that are culturally appropriate and that build on innovative approaches for reaching these communities.

Moving beyond the statistics, the stories of people like Siva Swaminathan, who is in the members' gallery, east side, give us a good reason to take pause. I related her story when I sponsored Bill 113 in 2008 to declare the month of November as Diabetes Awareness Month. Siva continues to be a great community hero. Since being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, she took action to change her diet and lifestyle. She has improved her health and works to improve the health of those who are suffering from diabetes in her community. In addition to being the chair of the South Asian diabetes chapter, Siva has used her culinary training to design healthy meal plans for diabetics. Siva hosts "how to cook healthier" workshops for South Asian women.

Kalyani Bhattacharya is a 57-year-old woman who is watching us on TV today. She has been living with diabetes for 18 years. She has suffered several health complications, including heat attack. Kalyani is a strong advocate of early childhood diabetes awareness and always tells her three grown-up daughters and three granddaughters to pay attention to their diet, exercise more often and lead healthy lives. Kalyani is right in doing so because if children are taught at an early age the benefits of a healthy diet and physical activity, diabetes can often be avoided later in life.

It is my hope that by declaring November as Diabetes Awareness Month in Ontario, we can help to educate and encourage our young people to make healthy choices at an early stage so that the number of people diagnosed with type 2 diabetes can be reduced in future.

In 2008, I spoke to you of Deborah Gibson and her son Trevor, who are sitting in the members' gallery, east side. Trevor was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age three.

From an early age, Trevor was unable to take part in many activities alongside his peers. His day would consist of six blood glucose tests, five insulin injections, a careful intake of food, as well as exercise, with constant adult supervision. Now, at age 18, Trevor's diabetes is easier to manage, thanks to an insulin pump he received in 2006 that delivers life-sustaining insulin around the clock. This allows greater independence, which has improved the quality of his life dramatically.

A month dedicated to awareness can also draw attention to existing programs. One such program is offered by an exercise physiologist who is also sitting in the members' gallery, east side: founder of Zumba West Fitness, Shonna Turpin. Shonna offers pre-diabetic individuals in Mississauga and Oakville six months of free fitness self-management classes. Shonna knows firsthand the importance and the difficulties of maintaining a healthy lifestyle because diabetes runs in her family. She is taking action by making it easier for people to stay healthy through the classes she offers.

I'm also very proud of what our government has already done to educate the public and support patients with diabetes so that those living with diabetes can enjoy a higher standard of living. The diabetes strategy, introduced in 2008, has invested in self-management initiatives for individuals with diabetes or their health care providers. Expanding the province's insulin pump plan, creating a new electronic diabetes registry and several education programs demonstrates this government's commitment to helping diabetics manage their condition.

But it is important that we don't stop there. We must continue to raise awareness of this very dangerous disease. That is why I have brought this bill forward again.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of everyone involved with the Canadian Diabetes Association. This incredible group of volunteers, researchers and professionals is working to prevent and manage diabetes through education, advocacy and research.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Shonna Turpin, who is applying her knowledge and expertise to offer pre-diabetic individuals free healthy living classes.

Shonna; Siva; Jamie Davis, director from Versus Inc.; many members of the Canadian Diabetes Association; Deborah Gibson; and Trevor are seated in the members' gallery, east side, today. I would like to thank them all for their continued dedication to diabetes awareness throughout Ontario and throughout Canada. Let's give them a big round of applause.

I would ask all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Let me begin by congratulating my colleague the member for Mississauga–Brampton South, Mrs. Mangat, for introducing this bill today which would, if passed—and I hope it will be—declare Diabetes Awareness Month in November of each year.

As a former health minister, I can certainly agree with what she said and attest to the fact that diabetes is a very, very serious chronic disease that, unfortunately, is increasing. It has a very dramatic impact on the lives of all those people who are diagnosed with it, as well as on their families and the rest of society.

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It's quite shocking to know that there are 1.2 million Ontarians who are living with this disease currently and that the number is expected to rise to 11.9% of the population by 2020.

I received a letter from the Canadian Diabetes Association, as I know other members did, and they are encouraging us to take this step, at a minimum, to raise awareness of the disease.

When you factor all the numbers in, it's estimated that one in four Ontarians will be living with either diabetes or pre-diabetes by 2020. Of course, that means that their quality of life is going to be impacted, and it also means

that the cost to our health care system and to our economy is going to be enormous.

There are a few issues here that we can definitely do something about. This is a preventable disease, and we have to do what we can to stop the increase in the number of people who have it.

What's so tragic about diabetes is that it is preventable. We know that individuals who have moderate to high levels of physical activity, who eat a healthy diet, who do not smoke and who consume alcohol in moderation have an 82% lower rate of getting diabetes. We keep saying that we need to eat healthy, that we need to exercise, and that we should stop smoking. It is so true. Health costs in this province could be reduced, and the quality of life for so many people could be improved. If we take a look at type 2 diabetes, if we were to live healthier, we could certainly see fewer cases in our province.

One only needs to look as far as these statistics to understand how absolutely pressing this issue is. We sometimes forget that there are complications associated with diabetes. It is responsible for 32% of all heart attacks suffered by Ontarians, 30% of all strokes, 51% of all new dialysis cases, 70% of all limb amputations in the province, and those who suffer from the disease will face annual costs for medications that are two to three times greater than the rest of the population.

I was pleased recently to meet with representatives from the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. The prevalence of diabetes in aboriginal communities, both on-reserve and off-reserve, is quite staggering. These friendship centres throughout the province are now partnering with aboriginal community leaders in an attempt to educate their members about the critical importance of healthy diets and healthy living. They were telling me that they've already seen great success simply by empowering people; in other words, educating them and raising awareness about making smart choices in lifestyle, in food and the need to exercise.

Our government did recognize the threat that was posed by diabetes. In 1995, Mr. Speaker, you will well remember, when you were Minister of Health you introduced the diabetes strategy, which was a five-year approach to prevent diabetes complications. We expanded the programs into southern Ontario, as we had already done in northern Ontario. In 1999, we initiated additional initiatives that were focused on children and also on the development of a primary prevention framework for type 2 diabetes.

There's more to be done. We not only need to treat the cases we currently have, but we need to focus on prevention. That's what this bill is all about. This is about educating our fellow Ontarians here in this province.

I hope that the bill will be passed, and I hope then we can use every method available to us to open the eyes and the ears of people in this province and provide them with motivation to re-evaluate their lifestyle.

I hope, most importantly, that children and teenagers, where we see increasing incidence of this disease, will become more aware of the gravity of the disease and also recognize that they can be empowered to establish healthy eating habits and a healthy lifestyle at a young age.

I will support this bill. I want to, again, commend the member for Mississauga–Brampton South, Ms. Mangat, for her passion and her work on this issue, and to thank all of those individuals who have contributed information to this discussion and this debate.

Let's do what we can to raise the awareness about diabetes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm just going to tell the member from Mississauga–Brampton South that I'm going to support her bill again. It's remarkable how kind she has been to her own government. Let me explain. We passed this bill on November 6, 2008—all of us; there wasn't even a vote. There was overwhelming support. It went to committee and it simply died there.

I looked at the member from Mississauga–Brampton South—composure, no recrimination, very kind to her colleagues and the Premier—and I thought that was so nice. If it was me, I don't know, I would be shooting bullets. I would be aiming a couple of guns, saying, "Who's stopping this?" But not her—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Rosie, you're not violent.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I try not to be violent.

I just want to read, for the record, the complexity of the bill, because surely it must have been very complex to deal with in committee. Let me read it for you. Article 1: "The month of November in each year is proclaimed as Diabetes Awareness Month"—complicated stuff; article 2: "This act comes into force on the day it receives royal assent." That's it.

I know it must have been very difficult to deal with in committee. I know that the committee must have been working very hard at many different issues, and they had probably feared thousands of amendments to this bill and that it would tie the committee up in so many complicated ways. They just couldn't do it—not in 2008, not in 2009, or 2010; two and a half years later, we're here.

The good doctor from Oak Ridges–Markham spoke to this bill; the now Minister of Children's and Youth Services from Etobicoke–Lakeshore spoke to this bill; my colleague from Nickel Belt and I said a couple of words. We all spoke very favourably to this. It's not complicated.

So we're here again debating a very, very simple issue. That's why it puzzles me that government just couldn't find it to proclaim it, to deal with it.

This bill is meant to bring awareness of a disease that has devastating effects, if not managed. That's pretty well what the member from Mississauga–Brampton South said earlier on, repeated by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. We all have the same opinions on this. We pretty well know.

I know the member from Nickel Belt thanked the Canadian Diabetes Association, as did the member who introduced the bill, because they're doing tremendous

work. Other volunteers are here today, and other people who are solving the problem are here today. We know many of them are doing a great deal of work in this field.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, as did the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, talked about the devastating effects that diabetes has on First Nations people. We know that in certain age brackets of First Nations, one in three suffer from diabetes. It's devastating to a huge number of people in that community, and it goes on.

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The consequences of untreated diabetes can be dire, as has been stated. We know that people need dialysis because of kidney failure; there's blindness that comes with this; people have limbs amputated as a result of diabetes; strokes and heart attacks—all of these are elevated in people with diabetes.

What the member from Nickel Belt argued two years ago was that we need a comprehensive chronic disease management strategy to reduce serious complications, and we need a comprehensive health promotion strategy to limit new cases of diabetes. That's what we need. Awareness is nice; we need a strategy, and this comprehensive chronic strategy comes with governments. It doesn't come from any other sector; it comes with governments.

The member from Mississauga–Brampton South said we spend $5 billion treating that disease. She said it two and a half years ago, and she said it today again. What do we spend on prevention? Eight million bucks; 1% of the budget. We know, and the member knows, we need to deal with prevention. The member stated we're spending $5 billion that we don't have, and we don't have a comprehensive chronic disease management strategy.

We spend little on prevention. Why? I ask those staffers at the back, "why do you still do it?" I ask the ministers who are sitting here, why are you still doing it? I ask the backbenchers in the Liberal government, why do we do it? We know it. We know what we have to do, yet we do so little. It's just sad—sad to even have to debate it.

My colleague from Nickel Belt says chronic disease management strategies directly link to access to interdisciplinary care; that is, physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, nutritionists, dietitians, social workers, health promoters and many others. They all work together toward the best practice of managing the care of people with diabetes. Those interdisciplinary teams are found in community health centres, in aboriginal health access centres and in community-governed family teams.

My friends, there's much we can do. A number of other people have talked about different issues that we are dealing with. I had a bill that I presented, that I will reintroduce very soon, that talks about banning commercial advertising for food or drink directed at children under 13 years of age. Why? Because these children are incredibly influenced by commercials. What are these commercials about? They're calorie-rich, calorie-dense and nutrient-poor. That's something that we could do as a government. Many, many children are eating the wrong things because of the direct influence of the commercials they watch on a daily basis. There's so much more that needs to be done. My colleague from Beaches–East York will soon articulate a few others.

I just wanted to say to the member from Brampton–Mississauga South, I'll be supporting you again. I hope your government does.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly delighted to speak yet again, some two years later, on this act introduced by the member for Mississauga–Brampton South, my seatmate. Of course, this act is to proclaim the month of November as Diabetes Awareness Month.

I'm going to concentrate my remarks on type 1 diabetes, particularly type 1 diabetes diagnosed in very young children. Also joining us in the east members' gallery is Shana Betz, who lives in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. She came to visit me last fall to tell me the story of Emma, her daughter, diagnosed at 10 months of age with type 1 diabetes. She certainly didn't acquire her diabetes from eating too many doughnuts or drinking soft drinks. We all know that type 1 diabetes is not actually preventable, but it can be well managed. The crucial thing, when your pancreas no longer produces any insulin, as is the case in type 1 diabetes, is that you manage the disease to the very best extent you can, to prevent some of the dreadful complications that have already been outlined today.

Shana came to visit me because she was quite concerned that as Emma approaches kindergarten in a couple of years—Emma is about to turn three—she will be very dependent on what happens in our schools in terms of the type of support that Emma will receive. She has an insulin pump. She will need blood glucose testing. If she exhibits any unusual symptoms, it may be a question of her needing some glucose to balance out her situation.

It is unfortunate that across the province, as I have been informed, various school boards take different approaches to how they assist children with diabetes. In York region we're fortunate. The York Region District School Board is one of the few school boards in Ontario that does have a fairly comprehensive policy toward children with diabetes. But in many places in the province, the type of assistance children need is simply not available, and a parent needs to negotiate. That's why this bill is so important.

We need to increase everyone's awareness about this disease and what they can do to help, and that includes personnel in schools. We need do demystify diabetes, to a certain extent, because the assistance that's required is really very modest. Any adult would easily be able to provide it.

That is why I've been urging our own Ministry of Education to introduce a more comprehensive provincial policy. New Brunswick has done this—there is an expectation of assistance to children within the schools—and I would very much like to see that. As I earnestly do

hope that this act proceeds to committee, this is the type of amendment I would be very interested in introducing to see a uniformity across our school system in terms of the assistance given to children.

This is an extremely important disease. We've heard how it is increasing in numbers due, certainly in part, to the increase in obesity, poor nutrition and lack of physical exercise. Whatever the cause, we need to minimize the complications. We need to take this situation very seriously here in Ontario.

I also would like to commend all our visitors for all the activities and work they've been doing, as well as the Canadian Diabetes Association.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: Certainly, we'll be supporting this bill for all the right reasons. But I have to say to the member for Oak Ridges–Markham that she must perhaps be more frustrated than the rest of us, being a former medical officer of health and a member of the government caucus, and not being able to convince her own Minister of Health and her own government of the importance of doing something about this issue.

It's almost to the day that we debated a bill here that was tabled by our colleague Mr. Levac. I well remember that bill. It was Bill 5, an Act to establish a bill of rights for pupils with diabetes. It was in the context of that bill that I was in touch with Shana Betz as well. Shana had a group at the time—I'm sure it's probably still functional, is it?—called Diabetes in Ontario Schools. They had conducted a survey, which I read into the record during debate of Bill 5, and that survey of parents from across this province—if nothing else, the information contained in that survey surely should have moved this government to action, and that bill didn't even go to committee. That bill had second reading here, and it died. The reason that it died is because this government is satisfied to just give private business hours some debate. Individual members, with all due respect, are well meaning and they'll put out—after this is passed today, you will see the press release and you'll see how the Legislature of Ontario supported this initiative, and then nothing will happen. Although perhaps in this case something might happen because it is the second time here and all we're really doing is asking for a month to be designated Diabetes Awareness Month.

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But I say to you that that is not enough; in fact, quite frankly, it's an insult to the many people in this province who suffer with this disease and who have children in schools, schools that don't know and don't have the ability or the resources to ensure that the very basic support for them is provided in the classroom. Children come home at the end of the day and parents are frustrated because their child perhaps was on the verge of death because something as simple as monitoring that child has not been done in that school.

It's fine to recognize that we have to be aware, but it's much more important that this government do something about this issue. We need not only to pass legislation here that says we're going to recognize things, but that we're going to solve them.

The Minister of Finance is going to stand up in this place and we're going to hear about a budget. He'll tell us how the province is in wonderful shape, thanks to their good management, and to stakeholders they'll say, "We can't do what you're asking us to do because we're in tough and dire financial straits." As with any other issue, it's a matter of priority, because this government, in the short time they've been in business, has more than doubled the debt of this province, and what do we have to show for it? Are we better off in this province than we were seven years ago? Are people with diabetes better off today than they were seven years ago, notwithstanding the doubling of the debt?

Interjection: Yes, they are.

Mr. Frank Klees: No, they're not. The member says yes. I want you to talk to the parents in the galleries and ask them if they're better off. You may say that we're spending more money, but the question is, where is that money going? What we have to do, and what I'm asking and hoping that this government will do, is look at issues like this and prioritize where that money is going and ensure that it goes to issues like this that can in fact prevent many more serious issues that are much more costly. This is called investing in our children and investing wisely.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: To the people in the audience and to the people watching TV, you will probably hear a lot of angst coming from people on this side of the House, and that is because we feel the same frustration, I'm sure, as the honourable member who put the bill forward today. Private members' bills very seldom become law. That's because in all of the committees there is this rule that they will not allow them to proceed to committee hearings and to third reading without the government's say-so.

There are some very good bills brought up by all members of this House, excellent bills that never see the light of day, and this is one of them. So you can see that, after two and a half years, we're back doing it again. Why there is any controversy about this bill, I don't know. I have no idea why this government will not allow it and probably 25 other bills to go forward that would assist the people of this province.

Having said that, this government, and I'm sure the members opposite, will vote today to send this to committee, where it will probably die. But what is it that's in their power that they will not do? That's what I want to talk about today.

Next week, there's going to be a budget. Next week, the finance minister is going to stand up, and I will all but guarantee you that there will be very little in that budget that will assist the cause of keeping people away from diabetes.

You have heard from some of them—and it's absolutely true—that if you live in a First Nations com-

munity, if you live far away from a big city, you are probably many times more likely to get diabetes in your life than if you live here in Toronto.

There's a reason for that. If any of you ever have the opportunity to travel to remote communities, those that don't have a railway or a road going into them—mostly First Nations communities up and around James and Hudson's Bay—you will see that the food is flown in. You will know, if you go into that store, that an orange or an apple costs about $2 or $3 each—not a bag; each. And you will know that you're not likely to see, through most of the year, any fresh fruit or vegetables at all. You will know that if there's something for your kid to buy, the only thing that costs about the same in that store as it costs here in Toronto are potato chips and soft drinks. That's the only thing.

You wonder why those kids get that. I remember having the debate with the Minister of Health Promotion, who's here today. She talked about how their government is starting to send in fresh fruits and vegetables so that people in those communities get them twice a month. But we know, and the Health Council of Canada knows, that you should be eating them five times a day. If there's any wonder why diabetes is rampant there, there ought not to be.

On April 1 this year, this government, in its wisdom, is going to cut out the special diet allowance for all pre-diabetic conditions. That's what they're going to do next week. That's the answer.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: That's not true.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh yes, it's true. It's been removed from the list and the money is not going to be there for that condition anymore. So is it any wonder that people are going to develop this condition?

If this government is truly serious, they'll do a lot more than vote for this private members' bill that they'll kill in committee. They will actually take some action to make sure that the people of Ontario are healthier and safer, live longer and have more productive lives, because in the end, it's way cheaper to give people fresh fruit and vegetables than it is to pay for a full-blown diabetic condition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm proud to rise in support of the member from Mississauga–Brampton South's Bill 162. I appreciate the comments that have been made by some of my colleagues in the House.

Let's just set the record straight here about private members' bills. We went around the horn a couple of times on the insulin pump bill, you may recall; we brought that back.

There have been other bills. I have a bill that passed without a dissenting vote in this House to make defibrillators available in all public buildings. Maybe we should have some sort of rule around here that any bill that is almost a no-brainer, for which there's no dissenting vote, must come back to the House for third reading.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Let's make it clear. It's the House leaders together who decide what private members' bills come back to this House. The House leaders together vote on that. They cut the deal one way or the other on the bills.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Anyhow, I'll go back to my substantive remarks, because I've obviously touched a sensitive nerve here.

We all own this problem. Nobody is guilty, but we're all responsible. Let's own up to that. I'll own up to that. Let's all own up to that.

Anyhow, I am pleased. I want to say for the record—some people know—I'm a type 2 diabetic. I discovered I was a diabetic as a result of a community clinic awareness day. The little kid wouldn't get his finger pricked and somebody said, "Well, Mr. McMeekin is not afraid to get his finger pricked." That was the beginning for me. Thank goodness. I was fortunate that that happened because I had to change some significant things in my life, and I work at that.

1520

One of my co-workers has a son who's a juvenile diabetic, and they had a heck of a time. I remember going away to Mexico with them for a week, and they had to call home twice a day because they were worried. That situation found some useful resolution when this House voted unanimously, for the second time, and it was finally approved, to provide insulin pumps to juvenile diabetics. There are things we have to do when our lifestyles change.

I'm very fortunate; I'm married to a family physician who's always on my case about what I should be doing. She fortunately offers me a lot of tips, some of which I take and some of which I ignore. I'm not going to talk about the obesity part. I'm working on that. That's something where the exercise is really important, right? In my case, I can lose 30 pounds and still have 30 more to lose, right? But we're working on it, in any event.

I'm really thrilled to be the sponsor of Canadian Diabetes Association Day at Queen's Park on April 4. This bill will, in fact, make it a lot easier for us to be about the important process of educating Ontarians.

It may come as a bit of a surprise or maybe even a shock to a couple of members opposite who talked about nothing happening, but I can tell you, as a diabetic, that there have been all kinds of good things that have been happening, like the $741 million that are being invested in the diabetes strategy. That may be insignificant to some folk in this House but it sure as heck isn't insignificant to me and a number of others who have to deal with this disease every single day.

I was impressed with the stats that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, a former health minister, shared about the consequences. I live in dreadful anticipation of some of those things befalling me, which is why I take it so seriously, and everybody in Ontario should.

They can't take it seriously unless they know about the disease and what they can do. We need to spend a lot

more time, I agree, dealing with things like obesity, making sure our kids are fit; making sure they know how to respond to a crash or a spike in blood sugar. There are people around who can help us do that. Fortunately, they're there.

Most people know about diabetes, but they don't always know about the symptoms and the causes. Having a full month dedicated to this, as the honourable member opposite has suggested, is a very good step.

Let's change the process around here so these things that we all agree on that just make common sense become the law of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Margarett R. Best: First of all, I want to take this opportunity to welcome members from the Canadian Diabetes Association, who are with us today, and other partners in the fight against diabetes.

In Ontario, approximately 1.2 million Ontarians live with diabetes every single day. This number is anticipated to increase to close to two million over the next decade. Diabetes is a huge health issue, not just here in Ontario but throughout Canada and, in fact, throughout the world.

According to the Canadian Diabetes Association's annual report, diabetes currently costs Ontario approximately $5 billion per year. Without increased efforts to prevent diabetes, annual costs may reach $7 billion by 2020.

Diabetes is a chronic disease with serious consequences, including devastating health effects on our population and escalating financial costs to our health care system.

Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness, end-stage kidney disease and amputation in Canadian adults. It is also a significant cause of cardiovascular complications, hypertension, stroke, cataracts and glaucoma.

The government of Ontario is taking a number of steps to address this very important issue through the Ontario diabetes strategy, a four-year plan focused on prevention, management and treatment of this debilitating disease.

Prevention of type 2 diabetes is important. The risk of developing type 2 diabetes can be reduced by more than 50% through nutrition and lifestyle interventions. It is crucial to continue to expand the critical prevention work we have to date. Cross-sectoral collaboration is also crucial to addressing this very serious issue. Education, raising awareness, making healthier food choices, engaging in daily physical activity, not smoking, and adopting healthier lifestyles are also important in the prevention and management of diabetes.

Through the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, we have an EatRight Ontario program, which is providing Ontarians with free access to registered dietitians via telephone and through an integrated website to provide important nutritious education and further raise awareness about this disease.

We know there is more work to be done, and we all have to work together and join hand in hand in fighting the debilitating effects of type 2 diabetes, and diabetes in general.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Mangat, you have two minutes for your response.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to thank members of all three parties for supporting Bill 162, the Diabetes Awareness Month Act, 2011. Specifically, I thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Trinity–Spadina, Newmarket–Aurora, Beaches–East York, Oak Ridges–Markham and Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, and the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, for their insight and thoughtful comments.

We have seen significant advances in our ability to manage and treat diabetes. Despite these advances, I strongly believe that education, awareness and prevention remain the most important tools for the management of diabetes. That is what Bill 162 is all about: awareness and timely prevention. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mrs. Mangat's ballot item has expired. We'll vote on this matter in about 50 minutes.

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE NÉERLANDAIS

Mrs. Witmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month / Projet de loi 166, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine néerlandais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It is an honour and a privilege to rise in the Legislature today to speak to Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month. I want to warmly welcome all those who are here today and those watching this debate on TV. I'd like to extend a special warm welcome to the consul of the Netherlands, Arie Plieger, who is here today, and also to Wilmar Kortleever, the president of Dutch Treat, which is a social and cultural organization. Welcome.

Dutch Treat actually does a lot to keep the Dutch culture alive, and each year they celebrate Sinterklaasfeest with Sinterklaas, which is very similar to our Santa Claus. I appreciate their contribution to doing that.

I also want to acknowledge Jacob van der Laan of Burlington, who is watching this debate on TV. For many years, Jack has spearheaded efforts through the Canada Netherlands Friendship Association to strengthen the ties of friendship between the two countries and keep alive the history of the sacrifices made by Canadians to liberate the Netherlands. There will once again be a celebration this May in Burlington to do exactly that.

1530

I want to acknowledge and thank the co-sponsors of this bill: the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex,

Maria Van Bommel, who like me was born in Holland, and the member from Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo. I also want to recognize the other two members in this House who are of Dutch descent: first, my colleague Ernie Hardeman, the MPP for Oxford, and of course my colleague the Honourable John Gerretsen, the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I'm also pleased that all three parties in this Legislature are going to support third reading passage of this bill today, thereby allowing our province to declare May as Dutch Heritage Month in Ontario.

The month of May is appropriate because every year on May 5, the people in the Netherlands celebrate their independence and their liberation, as well as the heroic efforts of the Canadian Forces and the pivotal role that they played in liberating Holland, with a national holiday known as Liberation Day. The Dutch will eternally be grateful to the Canadians for playing such an important role in their history. Even today, Dutch children are taught about the very significant, important role that our Canadian Forces played in the liberation. When our soldiers have returned to the Netherlands, they have always been hailed as heroes.

In fact, I would say to you personally that when we first came to Canada, my mom and dad were new to Exeter. They went into a local butcher shop and there was a person called Fred Darling. Well, of course, he recognized that they were Dutch and he told them that he had been one of the soldiers who had been there for the liberation. They hugged and they kissed, and until the day that Fred Darling passed away, my mom and dad had a great friendship with that man because they were so appreciative that he had been one of the liberators.

The month of May is also the time when tulips bloom, and tulips have become the symbol of the friendship between Canada and the Netherlands—a friendship, I will say to you, that has grown stronger over the years. Princess Juliana first sent tulips to the city of Ottawa as a token of her gratitude for the safe haven and hospitality the Dutch royal family received while living in Ottawa during the Second World War. Indeed, her daughter, Princess Margriet, was born in Ontario during that time. One million tulips now bloom in Canada's capital each year. Thus, by proclaiming the month of May as Dutch Heritage Month, the province of Ontario recognizes and celebrates the bonds of friendship established in 1945 between Canada and the Netherlands.

This bill also celebrates and recognizes the significant contributions that Dutch Canadians have made to the growth and prosperity of Ontario, particularly in the economic, political, social and cultural fields. Today, Ontario is home to about 500,000 Ontarians of Dutch descent, and there are roughly one million Dutch Canadians in Canada.

The Dutch first came to Canada in the early 1800s. However, Canada became a strongly favoured destination of choice after the Second World War, during the period of 1950 to 1955, when large numbers of Dutch citizens made the crossing to Canada, including a number of war brides of Canadian soldiers.

It was during this time that I arrived in Canada from the port of Rotterdam with my mother, father and brother. My mother tells me it was a rough trip of seven days on the ocean in a ship called the Vollendam. We landed in Halifax at Pier 21, as did so many other immigrants.

My family came with little in the way of material goods, but they came with that desire to work hard to provide a better life, a better future and more opportunity for their children. Work hard they did as they settled in Exeter, Ontario, doing whatever job was available and sometimes working at two or three jobs at a time in order to support their family and put food on the table.

I want to thank my parents for the sacrifices they made for me, as many other immigrants have done for their children.

I know that my mother is watching today. She just turned 90, and I just want to wish her a happy birthday.

Many of the immigrants who came after World War II settled in rural Ontario and found jobs in the agricultural sector. They quickly adapted to their new country, Canada, and they became involved and respected members of their communities. Many of the descendants of the original settlers still remain in these rural communities throughout Ontario to this day, but many others, like myself and my brother, have relocated to urban communities.

Today fewer Dutch immigrants come to Ontario, but, like the original immigrants who made the journey, the modern-day immigrants come with the same entrepreneurial spirit and work ethic and the desire to contribute to our great province and our great country. I would say to you that like all the previous immigrants, they soon come to love this country with their whole heart, as our family did, and consider themselves Canadians.

Today, I'm proud to say that the province of Ontario and the Netherlands are close and reliable partners. We share innovation, ingenuity and creativity. We share common values and goals, and we work together to produce, innovate and build. Whether in the sphere of the green economy, engineering, architecture, urban planning, agriculture or sustainable development, we work together to create more prosperous and healthier communities. We share expertise and experience. Our governments and private sector firms collaborate to work co-operatively in the global economy.

There are also strong ties and partnerships between the universities in Ontario and the Netherlands. This includes a recent partnership between McMaster University in Hamilton and the university of Maastricht to develop a program of global health. It is intended to educate the leaders who will work in global health in the future.

We are very fortunate to have both Ambassador Geerts in Ottawa and Consul General Horbach in Toronto, who actively support and encourage the partnerships between business and also are involved in the maintenance of the Dutch cultural traditions in Ontario and Canada. In particular, they were very involved in the recent celebrations to commemorate the 65 years of friendship between our two countries. These celebrations included a very strong emphasis on the pivotal role our

Canadian men and women in uniform played in securing freedom for the Dutch people. As well, in many Canadian cities we had "Go Green, Go Dutch, Go Bike" bike rides to focus on the environment, health, bike safety and bike infrastructure.

By passing this particular act and proclaiming May as Dutch Heritage Month in Ontario, we will be able to recognize those special bonds of friendship between Ontario and the Netherlands, and we will also be able to recognize the contributions of Canadians of Dutch descent to the growth and prosperity of our great province. We not only will be able to look back to our history, but we will be able to look forward to our shared future as partners and as friends.

Again, I thank all those of Dutch descent who have played a significant role in the growth and prosperity of Ontario. There are so many that I couldn't possibly name all of the individuals.

I also want to thank the co-sponsors of my bill.

I would ask you to give your support today in order that we can recognize this group of people and our shared friendship and partnership.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1540

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise very much in support of this bill and I thank the mover for moving it.

As I stand here—and I hope I don't tear up. My father died two years ago. He was one of those thousands of men and women who fought their way through the streets and canals of Holland. He instilled in me his love and admiration for the people he met there, because when he got there, it was after that horrible winter, before the liberation, when the people were starving, when they had been reduced to total poverty, when many of the buildings in which they lived had been reduced to rubble and they had very little or nothing, except an enormous hope that they would soon be free.

He had a very strong pride in Holland and in the Dutch people. He had that pride and was overjoyed when the pride that he had was reciprocated to Canadians, particularly after he came back to Canada in 1945. He ended the war in Germany, not in Holland. He often told me of stories of all of the countries where he was forced to fight and that he had visited as a young man.

As a young man, he took me to Ottawa for the first time to see the tulip festival. I think I was about 15 or 16 years old, and I had never been to Ottawa from Toronto. It seems so close today, but it was so far away in those days. We went to see the tulips that were a gift from a grateful nation.

My father often talked about wanting to go back to Holland. In fact, almost every time I would see him throughout my entire life, going to visit, he'd always talk about Holland and always say that one day he wanted to go back. He lived till 88 years of age, but unfortunately, he never got back there.

But it has been my privilege to go back for him. I've been there twice. It's an amazing place. It's absolutely wonderful. Anyone who has never been there, you deserve an opportunity to go to see a beautiful country. I mean, it doesn't have too many hills or mountains or things like that; it's pretty flat. But it is absolutely pristine and beautiful for the length and breadth of that place. If you travel by boat up and down the canals or along the rivers or in the Zuiderzee, you will see amazing architecture. You will see beautiful countryside. You will see trees and orchards and farms. You will see water. You will see places of culture.

If you have an opportunity to go into Amsterdam, you'll probably see one of the most vibrant cities on the entire earth. It is a place of great culture and of freedom and of the mixing of peoples.

That is what I have experienced here with the Dutch in Canada as well and, in fact, when I have travelled around the world to those places that were formally part of Holland, like Indonesia. If you go there and see the Dutch influence and what was left behind, if you go to little places in the Caribbean, like St. Maarten, and see the influence and what was left behind, it was all good.

So we who live here in Canada and who have known the Dutch for our lives, know of them as people who came here with a huge work ethic, with a real desire to make this their own country, with a real desire to share with us the very best of their own culture. And I have to say, they often do it in a very quiet, unassuming way. You would sometimes not even know of their Dutch ancestry, but very subtly you would be influenced by the things they had to say.

I know when I was a boy, my father's friends, many of whom were soldiers and buddies he had met in the army, were married to Dutch women. It wasn't till I was a little older I discovered the reason why is because they had met them in Holland and had sent for them or brought them back as war brides. They were all, I remember in my youth, such wonderful women who spoke so very well and who looked after their children so incredibly well.

This is a bill that needs to pass. I did not know that the member was hoping to get third reading today. I had not been informed of that. Usually you have to seek permission from the whip in order for to you vote that way. But being unaware, and he not being here, I can give you every assurance that, whether I'm supposed to or not, I will because I think this needs to pass. I don't want for this to be stuck in a committee somewhere as so many other bills are.

There is absolutely not a person in this province that I am aware of, not a soul who would resent that this bill became law, and certainly many, many hundreds of thousands of people of Dutch ancestry want it to pass.

I also have to close with a statement that I am a very proud member of the Royal Canadian Legion. I'm an associate member because I was never a soldier, and I'm a member because my father was and because he had served.

There is a huge love for the Dutch people, a huge sense of pride and accomplishment that one can hear, no

matter what Legion branch you go into in this entire country and certainly in this entire province. If they have one thing for which they are proud, and universally proud, it's the role that Canada played in Holland.

When you talk to the men and women who were there, when you talk to the sons and daughters of those men and women, unfortunately many of whom are now deceased, you will know that this is a sense of overwhelming pride and commitment that each and every member of the Royal Canadian Legion shares.

I thank the member for bringing this forward. I will vote for it on second reading, and if it gets to third reading, I will vote again. Thank you very much for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: First of all, I want to thank Ms. Witmer for asking me to cosponsor this bill. I feel very honoured to have done that as we both share our Dutch heritage.

Certainly, as she has said, the real Dutch love affair with Canada began during and after the Second World War. My own family came here in 1948 on the Kota Inten, which was a troopship. At that time, the men were at one end and the women and children at the other and everybody slept in hammocks. They came across in March, it was a really awful trip. Everyone was just simply glad to arrive at pier 21 in Halifax.

My husband René's family came in 1957. By that time, passenger liners were bringing them, and he came on what was known as the Maasdam.

My mom was always a great storyteller. One of the things that made doing the dishes—and I'm the oldest of 10, so you can imagine the amount of dishes that that implies—was the fact that during dishes mom would tell her stories. She certainly told her stories about being in Holland during the Second World War, about the honger-winter, about the soldiers coming and the vlucht. My mom left with her mother from their home. They were forced out of their home, and they lived with other Dutch families waiting to return. She'd tell the story of waiting for the Canadians, and a rumour had already come out that the Canadians were coming. She said that on about the third day she started to worry that maybe they weren't. But she said, "True to their word, there they were."

The Canadians were so trusted by the Dutch and so embraced by the Dutch that when it came time, at the end of the war, when the country was so wartorn and families started to look for places to move to, as Ms. Witmer said, Canada was the first choice. That was simply because we had links there.

My own grandfather, my mother's father, was a klopenmaker. He made wooden shoes. My mother never had anything but wooden shoes until her wedding day, and on her wedding day she got leather shoes. Three days later, she got on the Kota Inten to come to Canada with her new husband. On the way, because it was so rough on the seas, there was an event that led to her losing her nice leather shoes, so she got off the boat in her wooden shoes. She tells us about this all the time. There she was on pier 21, and she was so proud that she had these lovely shoes, and she still had to wear her wooden shoes to get off the boat.

1550

That was the kind of thing that we heard about as children—and the fact that our parents wanted to come here so badly. We've heard so many stories—and we heard earlier today during the Greek independence festivities—about immigrants coming here with nothing in their pockets. I think that could be said of every nationality: that so many of our ancestors immigrated here with nothing in their pockets.

I think the one thing that can be said of Canada is that we are not a melting pot; we are a quilt. We are a beautiful quilt of many colours and wondrous shapes that have been stitched together to become a blanket for those who need it. That's what Canada is to many of us.

As Ms. Witmer said, the majority of Dutch immigrants settled here in Ontario. They pursued many careers—teachers, doctors, nurses—but the majority started their lives here in Canada as farm labourers and working in hospitals and factories. But from there, they grew.

When Mr. Prue was talking about the affiliation and the love that the Legion has for the Dutch, I think they also have a pride in where the Dutch have gone since they came here, and I think they share in that, as we do. I'm also an associate member of the Legion, just simply because I was taught by my parents that we owed them that. We have a debt to Canadians and to Canadian soldiers for what they did for our home country.

If I look in my own riding, I see that a number of my constituents of Dutch descent are farmers. They certainly brought their love of growing things like tulips here to this country. The concession roads are dotted with mailboxes that all have Dutch names on them. As you go along, these are now third generation, as is my own son, and a lot of them are still on the original farms that their families bought. They grouped together and created a credit union in our area called the St. Willibrord Credit Union. This was a way of helping each other, in a co-op, to become farmers and to own their own properties. Now they're very successful families, who are third generation with multiple brothers and sisters, all operating in farm operations.

The Dutch have a great sense of humour, I think. We may be quiet about it, but we always tease each other and say, "If you're not Dutch, you're not much." We certainly enjoy laughing at ourselves.

I am very proud to have been asked to participate in this and certainly very proud to have been asked to be a co-sponsor of this bill. I certainly feel that there is a special bond between Canada and the Dutch nation, and I think a heritage month is very appropriate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am so pleased to stand in support of my colleague and friend the member for

Kitchener–Waterloo. She's doing for her community what I would expect of her, because she so typifies the strength of character that I have come to know is really emblematic of Dutch Ontarians and Dutch Canadians in general.

My ties to Holland are tenuous but not zero. First of all, I can tell you that there are Shurmans in Holland to this day. I've had the pleasure of visiting the country and visiting some of my relatives and have enjoyed every moment of it and taken an interest in the country as a result.

Further to that, as members know, I represent a riding that is one of the most—if not the most—diverse ridings in the entire country. One of the things the last four years has given me is an opportunity to look first-hand at the cultural backgrounds of people who have come together, all of us from different lands—being separated from them by one, two, three generations, whatever it happens to be—to preserve them and at the same time integrate those cultural elements into the Canadian fact. Dutch immigrants to Canada have had such a vibrant history of community building and civic responsibility, and that's one of the reasons I'm sure my colleague got into this business in the first place. This bill honours those Dutch Canadians who have added and enhanced the Canadian experience for so many of us.

We have a spate of these bills setting aside days or weeks or months to honour different cultures. We heard one earlier this afternoon on Ukrainian Ontarians. Now, we're dealing with Dutch Ontarians. A couple of months ago, I, together with the member for Trinity–Spadina and the member for York West, were successful in getting a bill passed to honour Italian Ontarians. I think these are important things to do. When you have a province like this, where, really, the only people who can say that they were originals are Native Canadians, we have to set people aside and direct something in their way by way of a week or some sort of recognition to honour their contribution.

The 2006 Statistics Canada census recorded 1,035,965 people of Dutch origin in Canada. Think about that: That's about 3% of the entire population. I, like many in this Legislature, had parents who immigrated to Canada from Europe, all of them—my parents and everybody else—seeking a better life in Canada. I think I can say with agreement from everybody here and everybody I know that they found a better life, and that we all continue to contribute to making it so. I have a full appreciation for the struggles that many immigrants have endured in order to come to our country and enhance their lives.

One of the things that occurs to me when I think about Dutch Canadians is that about 15, 16 or 17 years ago, I learned how to fly an airplane. I learned from a young girl, 21 at the time, who came from a dairy farm in southwestern Ontario. Her mother's side was entirely Dutch.

I had the pleasure of going to that farm and seeing how a modern dairy farm works, and I was informed at the time that a lot of people who settled in our midst from Holland wound up gravitating towards southwestern Ontario, and very particularly into farming and dairy farming. Lest anybody think, when you say the word "farmer"—if you're not a person who has visited a farm or knows about farming, farmers are not people who ride the turnip truck; farmers are people who are educated, and no more so than people of Dutch origin who have gone into this business. And it is a business: agribusiness.

That farm watered crops on the basis of satellite feeds to computers. My pilot friend's dad was a bachelor of science graduate from Guelph University.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Whoo-hoo!

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Guelph.

Mom considered this farm business very much a personal thing, and it was entirely family in orientation. The Dutch side of it settled in the second migration, which was between 1923 and 1930, where we saw settlement here in Ontario, in Alberta and in British Columbia.

There's a lot of significance to what the contribution is from Dutch Ontarians; there will continue to be, undoubtedly. My time is up, so I'll say simply this: I'm proud to be a supporter of this bill and I look forward to its passage later today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure again to speak to another bill, Dutch Heritage Month, that is very similar to the one we dealt with about an hour ago, Ukrainian Heritage Day.

It is really a treat to listen to the different stories from different members. What you realize is that, unless you are a refugee—and refugees have a different experience than other immigrants—the rest of us have really talked about the same kind of immigrant experience. It was fun to talk about Italian Heritage Month just about a year ago, and we've done the same with the Portuguese. We do the same with so many other different communities. That is the remarkable beauty of what we represent here as MPPs and just as a community.

There is no one singular identity, but there is one Canadian identity made up of a multiplicity of linguistic and racial communities, and it's just beautiful. I just get excited every time we talk about our differences, because as we do we realize how similar we are.

1600

As I talk about the issue of Dutch heritage month—for me, everything is personal; how do I relate to the different communities? The way I relate to the Dutch is through soccer. I'm a big Italian fan, obviously. So when the World Cup and the European Cup come, I'm just there. So immediately, my relationship to the Dutch is through soccer players, and there are quite a number of greats. I had to think of the many greats I could remember, and where I couldn't, I called my son, Michael Marchese, who filled in.

Who are these greats? Well, we have Rafael van der Vaart; Ruud van Nistelrooy; Jaap Stam, a defenceman—I forget whether he played for Inter Milan or Juventus;

Dennis Bergkamp, a well-known striker; Edgar Davids, a great player who used to play for Juventus; Edwin van der Sar; Patrick Kluivert—a long-time national soccer scorer; and Arjen Robben: great soccer players. That's how I relate to you guys, because you are strong opponents of the Italian team.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We beat you most of the time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: From time to time you beat us, but it's not usually the case.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Most of the time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't get carried away.

The other relationship I have with the Dutch is that my son, Michael Marchese, has a partner—they bought a house a year ago—and she's half Dutch. Her name is Angela Westelaken; a delightful person, happy to have her in the family. They're not married yet; they might at some point, given that they bought a house. They could potentially at some point. But I'm happy to have met Angela, and my son is quite happy with her.

These are the relationships we build with people on the basis of so many contact points. This is what Ontario is about; this is what Canada is about. It's a wonderful thing to be part of, and as I said earlier, this is our identity and when we mix them together we create one hell of a race. Congratulations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to speak to this bill as well. It brings back so many memories.

I, perhaps a bit unlike the other members of Dutch descent, came here a little bit later on in life. My dad always used to call me a half-price Canadian, because when we got on the boat on June 8, 1954, I was 11 years old and when we got off the Ryndam in Montreal I was 12. We settled in Kingston shortly thereafter.

Of course, the one thing I remember quite vividly is that I finished all of my grade schooling in Holland. I finished grade six. I think they gave me a special exemption in the last two weeks of June to actually finish it.

But what I do remember very vividly and very correctly is that far as the Dutch history books were concerned in those days, the liberators of Holland were the Canadians. With all due respect to the Americans, the Brits and what have you, in the Dutch history books, the Canadians liberated Holland.

I can remember my mother telling me—I was about three or four years old when the war actually finished—that she remembered so vividly the Canadian soldiers coming into our city. I was born in Hilversum; my parents were both born in Amsterdam. Hilversum is one of the few places that is actually above sea level. We always used to call it the Hollywood of Holland. It's where the communications, radio, television and movie industries are located. As a matter of fact, as a youngster I sang in a radio choir, believe it or not, once a week for a good three or four years. These are all very vivid personal memories that I have.

One of the things my mother always tells me is that she can remember what the Canadian soldiers did as they came down the main street—we lived on one of the main streets; my dad had a store there at the time. They were handing out, dare I say, cigarettes and chocolate.

The other picture that we have is that right after the war you would have these neighbourhood celebrations, and for some strange reason I was the child that cut the ribbon that actually started the festivities that day. Now, I have no idea whether that's got any connection with my political career, but there it is, for whatever it's worth.

I had the great privilege of being part of the Canadian delegation in 2005, as minister responsible for seniors, at the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Holland events. I can remember going to cemeteries, like Holten, and there are so many others, particularly in the southern part of Holland, where tremendous fighting took place in 1944, where literally thousands upon thousands of graves are there that have young Canadian soldiers in them.

I was extremely moved by all that because I was told of situations, for example, where on Christmas Eve children from those communities still to this day, three or four generations later, light a candle at each and every gravesite of each and every soldier, and there are thousands of them buried there.

I always believed that one of the reasons why there is such a great interaction between Canada and the Netherlands is that we're both mid-sized powers. We're not quite up there with the big guys, but we both feel that we have an influence around the rest of the world because we are a balanced people.

I think what the Dutch always pride themselves on is the ability to look at both sides of an argument and, yes, come down on one side or the other, and sometimes it's not necessarily the same side, but that's the way we view ourselves. We've always been sort of regarding ourselves as the negotiators in the world, the kinds of people that try to bring a consensus amongst people.

May is a very appropriate month. On April 30, which is actually the day before May 1, the queen's birthday is always celebrated. With Queen Juliana, who was the queen for many, many years after the Second World War, who followed her mother, Queen Wilhelmina, that was April 30, and current Queen Beatrix has kept that date.

It's followed, as has already been mentioned by Ms. Witmer, on May 5 by Liberation Day, but there's a very significant event that takes place on May 4 at 8 o'clock in the evening. That is the time when the whole country comes to a standstill and we remember the tremendous sacrifices that the Canadian soldiers, by and large, made to liberate us in Holland.

When I think of my parents—and I haven't got much time left—they were 40 years old, like so many of the other people that we've talked about, other immigrants as well. They came to this country—and we didn't have to come; quite frankly, we had it quite good in Holland, comparatively speaking, to the rest of the Dutch population. But what they always felt was that this was the country where they could give their kids—and there were three of us at the time—the best possible start in life.

That's why they came here at age 40 without speaking a word of English and with all of the things and all of the problems that people initially have, without, I might dare say, any government support in those days. But they made it, like so many other people from so many other countries. That is truly what has made this province and this country great. We're all the beneficiaries of that.

I'm very pleased to be part of this, to be able to speak today on the contribution that the Dutch have made to this province in declaring the month of May Dutch Heritage Month. I'd like to thank the mover and seconder for moving this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this chance this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 166, the Dutch Heritage Month Act. This idea was originally initiated by my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I want to commend and congratulate her, and also acknowledge the co-sponsors of the bill.

This gives me the opportunity to talk about the contributions of Dutch Canadians, the contributions they have made and continue to make in our communities and in our country.

When I think of the courage and the character of the Dutch people who came to live in Canada after the Second World War, I'm reminded of a Dutch family I have come to know quite well: a young couple who together survived the hardships of the war and the occupation, and we know how the people of Holland suffered. When it was finally over, they were blessed with two children.

Like so many of their neighbours, they dreamed of a better life in a distant land, and they made the decision to come to Canada, but when they arrived here, in 1951, their dream of a better life was almost shattered. After arriving in Halifax during the month of March, a four-day train trip to Alberta followed. The train cars had no heat and they had no winter clothes. Fortunately, someone had insisted that they take the blankets from the ship so that the children could be kept warm on the long train journey.

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When they arrived at their destination, a farm near Lethbridge where they had been offered work, their new home was little better than a shed—one room, no running water, no kitchen, no washroom, scant furnishings. They were all expected to work, even the children aged four and three, tending a 12-acre field of sugar beets. The work was manual, hard—horrible, even. It became more than they could bear, and when the chance came to move once more, this time to southwestern Ontario, they were back on a train, this time heading east to Ontario.

With the help of a local church, they were welcomed into a new community, and it was their faith and the love and mutual support of the family that allowed them to make it. They made this new community their own, contributing to it and to the province of Ontario as a whole in more ways than I will go into this afternoon.

With all the hardships they endured, all the challenges they overcame, all of it was worth it. Like so many who came to Canada from the Netherlands, they did it for the sake of their children. Their story is not unique. Many Dutch families had the same experience. And this beautiful, wonderful lady I know, who just celebrated her 90th birthday, told me this morning how proud she is to be able to say that she is a Canadian.

This family and stories like theirs make me proud to say that I'm a Canadian. That's why I'm very pleased to speak in support of Bill 166, which recognizes the more than half a million Dutch immigrants who have made Ontario their home. Dutch Canadians have made important contributions to the life of our province, from the essential role Canadian soldiers played in the liberation of the Netherlands to the enduring friendships we see today. Dutch Canadians know how to be loyal to their roots and traditions while at the same time being very proud Canadians.

Many Dutch Canadians have become farm leaders here in Ontario. Think of the Holland Marsh near Barrie, or, closer to home for us in Wellington county, the hundreds of farm families of Dutch descent who strengthen our community.

And so I want to congratulate the many Dutch Canadians who are making such a difference in our communities, one of whom is our very own member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Coming here with their dreams and a willingness to work hard and sacrifice much, they realized their dreams, and in the realization of those dreams, Canada has been enriched and strengthened, helping to make us the best country in the world.

Remarks in Dutch

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Frank—the honourable member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I think you should put some time back on the clock here for me.

I'm honoured to have just a couple of minutes to speak to this. First, to my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I want to say through you to your mother: happy birthday.

An immigrant as well, we celebrate our origins and our cultures.

I want to tell the member who made reference to Holland Marsh that while in fact it was Dutch settlers, the term "Holland Marsh" was not because of that. It was actually named after Major J.A. Holland, who was not Dutch. But it does consist of 7,000 acres of reclaimed land in the Schomberg River Valley. John Snor, the Canadian representative of the Netherlands Emigration Foundation, visited that area in 1931 and proposed that in fact Dutch settlers should go there. As a result of that, the pioneer Dutch settlers did end up there, and we know it now as the breadbasket of Ontario.

A number of farmers joined that settlement: the families of Voorberg, Verkaik, Snor, van der Kooij and Rupke. In fact, it was Jack Rupke who nominated me when I first ran as a candidate in 1995 for the PC Party.

So I suppose I'm very much a part of the Dutch family, and certainly in terms of my political life I claim that background.

Last year marked the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Holland by the Canadian Armed Forces. Reference has been made to that. As is the custom, the Dutch Canadian Association of Greater Toronto and the consul general of the Netherlands hosted a Thank You, Liberators conference last year, held on May 8, to express their gratitude to Canadian veterans for their sacrifice. Mr. Evert Akkerman of Newmarket, the association treasurer and conference coordinator, said at that time, "I thank these veterans, my parents thank them, my grandparents thank them; my country thanks them." Mr. Akkerman is also involved in the documentation of stories by Canadian veterans who helped liberate Holland. As he said, "These soldiers spent years away from their families. They won us our freedom. I'm still impressed that Canadians went. What happened in Europe was none of their business."

It is an honour for me to support this bill to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month. This act of the Parliament of Ontario will be a historical way of saying thank you to Ontario's Dutch-Canadian community for its many historic and ongoing contributions to our province and our nation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Kitchener–Waterloo, Mrs. Witmer, has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Let me begin by thanking the members for Beaches–East York, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Wellington–Halton Hills, Kingston and the Islands, Thornhill, Trinity–Spadina and Newmarket–Aurora.

I think one of the points that has emerged today is that there are extremely, extremely strong bonds of friendship between Holland—I should say the Netherlands—and the province of Ontario and Canada. I think we can see that those bonds of friendship began as a result of the Canadian forces playing such a pivotal role in the liberation of the Netherlands at the end of World War II. Like some of the speakers here today, I've heard many, many stories about the hardships that the Dutch people endured during World War II and also the joy and anticipation they had when they heard that the Canadians were going to be liberating their country. My dad was a member of the Dutch underground, and so he was personally involved in the war.

As well, we have heard about the contributions that those of Dutch descent have made to the province of Ontario. Many of them who first came were involved in agriculture. But in more recent years, we've had many, many people who have made contributions: They've been business people, and we've seen them involved in construction, in finances and in technology.

Certainly, they continue to value and appreciate their roots, but they're also a group of people who, like myself, have become totally integrated into the Canadian way of life. I'm sad to say my children don't speak Dutch, nor does my husband. But I will tell you, when it comes time for that Dutch soccer team to play, my kids are Dutch, and they do say, "If you're not Dutch, you're not much."

Thank you today for the support that I have received.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired. It's now time to vote.

UKRAINIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE UKRAINIEN

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 70, standing in the name of Mr. Martiniuk.

Mr. Martiniuk has moved second reading of Bill 155, An Act to proclaim Ukrainian Heritage Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

UKRAINIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE UKRAINIEN

Mr. Martiniuk moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to proclaim Ukrainian Heritage Day / Projet de loi 155, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine ukrainien.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION AU DIABÈTE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 71, standing in the name of Mrs. Mangat.

Mrs. Mangat has moved second reading of Bill 162, An Act to proclaim the month of November Diabetes Awareness Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I ask that Bill 162 be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed. So ordered.

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE NÉERLANDAIS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 72, standing in the name of Mrs. Witmer.

Mrs. Witmer has moved second reading of Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE NÉERLANDAIS

Mrs. Witmer moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month / Projet de loi 166, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine néerlandais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day. The Honourable Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. It is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1621.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Peter Fonseca
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
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Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
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David Zimmer
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Bas Balkissoon, Steve Clark
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group / Comité spécial sur la transaction proposée entre le Groupe TMX et le London Stock Exchange Group

Chair / Président: Gerry Phillips
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Frank Klees
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Gilles Bisson, Michael A. Brown
Frank Klees, Gerry Phillips
Peter Shurman, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Lundi 28 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 mars 2011

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR MISSISSAUGA EAST–COOKSVILLE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Peter Fonseca as the member for the electoral district of Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the east public gallery, we are joined by the grade 10 class from St. Augustine Catholic High School in my riding. Also, teacher Christina Iorio is accompanying the class.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: This morning, I had the privilege of meeting with some medical students from the OMA. Chloe Ward is at the University of Ottawa, and she is from the great town of Pembroke. Sophia Lane is at the University of Western Ontario, and she is from Kitchener. I don't think they're in here yet, but they're on their way, and we're delighted to have them this morning.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's great pleasure to introduce Master Alijan Alijanpour and his family and friends in the east gallery. This morning, Mr. Speaker, you hosted an event where you unveiled his masterpiece painting of this Legislative Building. Please join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And on behalf of the Legislature, I would just like to say thank you very much for the kind donation of the painting. It's going to hang proudly here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure for me today to welcome to the members' west gallery the parents and grandparents of our page Travis Poland: Christine Poland and Dave Poland, his mother and dad; and his brother Tyler. They're joined by his grandparents Joyce and Bob Poland, their granddaughter Alison Poland and my wife, Elizabeth Bailey, his aunt. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to introduce members from the Ontario Medical Students Association, including co-chairs Christina Nowik and Kyle Cullingham, who join 50 other medical students who are visiting Queen's Park today for their seventh annual lobby day. Welcome to all.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): During question period on Thursday, March 24, I interrupted a question being posed by the member for Thornhill, Mr. Shurman. I did so out of a concern that it was more of a not-so-veiled attempt to import the Canadian general election onto the floor of this chamber as opposed to a question that related to and dealt with matters of provincial policy and issues within the jurisdiction of this assembly.

Following question period, the House leader of the official opposition, Mr. Yakabuski, raised a point of order. He was followed by the House leader for the third party, Mr. Kormos, and the government House leader, Ms. Smith.

I have nothing but a desire to see this place function well. This happens when the House is operating within a band of reasonably acceptable decorum, where members can hear each other and business actually can be conducted. This band is actually very broad, and I think there is almost an intuitive consensus among us as to where that band usually lies.

Last Thursday, I was asked for my guidance on what is an appropriate exchange between members of this House. My point of view in that regard has never changed, nor is it a new perspective.

The purpose of question period in this House is to seek and provide information relating to provincial policy. Questions asked of a minister and answers given must be relevant to his or her program responsibilities. As I said, this is not new; a cursory glance at the precedents in this regard reveals such rulings going back as far as 1978. Specifically, in a case on point, Speaker Carr had this to say on June 4, 2001: "To read other people's records during a by-election is not the purpose of question period.... I will not allow people to use the questions to turn them into partisan situations."

Last Thursday, I simply asked the member for Thornhill to link his question to this government's policy. He attempted to do so, and I allowed the question. I do not

think it is too difficult a concept to grasp that the executive council is responsible for the policies of this government and not for the comments or opinions of candidates in the federal election, and that it is these policies upon which they should be questioned.

I fully expect that the Canadian general election—only a prospect last Thursday, but now in full swing—will find its way onto the floor of this Legislature. As the member for Welland said, politics is what this place is all about. Of course, national issues are of significance and relevance here. However, it is that relevance to provincial policy that I insist on. I would ask all members to keep that in mind when crafting their questions and formulating answers so that we can maintain the integrity of question period and not succumb to the temptation to wander too far into the political battlefield of a federal election.

I thank the House leaders for all your submissions on this issue.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Last year, after finally admitting that your runaway spending meant Ontario was on the verge of doubling its debt, you famously retreated to your "thinking place." When you emerged, you said that you finally had a plan. You said two things: One, you would freeze public sector wages, and second, you would find savings by streamlining agencies.

Now, a year later, we see that your public sector restraint package is badly off the rails and arbitrators are thumbing their noses at your wage freeze, driving up costs. Secondly, you seem to want to pat yourself on the back on agencies, but in reality you've pared back only 0.0002% in spending.

Premier, since you didn't keep your promises last year, why should we believe your budget commitments in 2011?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, and we look forward to presenting our budget inside this hallowed precinct, not over at Magna. I can also assure you that there will be no hidden deficits. We will be very transparent, very open and honest with the people of Ontario, unlike the government before us.

I also want to say that when it comes to our plan, there's no doubt about it: It differs dramatically from that which would be proposed by my honourable colleague and his party. We are not prepared to fire nurses. We are not prepared to shut down hospitals. We're not prepared to lay off meat inspectors and water inspectors. Those are the kinds of investments, the kind of public services, that our families have to be able to count on. We have another way when it comes to introducing balance and responsible progress when it comes to eliminating the deficit over time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Premier, the reality is that you are on track to doubling the provincial debt. The fact of the matter is that you and your caucus are hardwired to tax and spend. It's simply part of the McGuinty DNA.

Last year, you pushed your luck by telling families you were a changed man, that you finally understood the need to get spending under control and give average families a break. But now, a year later, Premier, we see you have not changed at all. You've made no attempt to get your spending under control, your wage restraint package is badly off the rails and Ontario families are paying more and more and getting less in return.

Quite frankly, Premier, why should we believe a single word in tomorrow's budget?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I like to say, history can be our friend. Let's revisit what happened in 2003. We asked the Provincial Auditor to take a very close look at the books, because the government before us had asserted that the budget was balanced. But we discovered that the previous government had hidden a $5.5-billion deficit. So we worked very hard to eliminate that deficit over time, which we did. We then balanced the budget for three successive years.

Then we were hit with a global recession. We thought it was important to support our auto sector. We thought it was important to participate in the global effort to stimulate the economy. That meant we borrowed money. That led to a larger deficit. That's the rationale behind the deficit. What we're going to do now is lay out a plan that's going to eliminate the deficit over time.

But we will not, for example, as my colleague opposite insists, take $3 billion out of health care. That is unacceptable and not in keeping with our values and the values of Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier obviously has an eight-year amnesia case going on affecting his judgment. The Premier forgets about the fact that he raised taxes on Ontario families through the roof with his HST tax grab, with his so-called health tax, with his eco tax—the list goes on and on.

The problem, Premier, is that it's in your DNA to ramp up spending, and you keep increasing taxes to try to pay for it. But it doesn't work. Ontario families are absolutely tapped out. Families need a break, and they need a Premier to rein in his runaway spending.

Premier, why is it that you see every Ontario family as your own personal ATM?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can always appreciate the perspective offered by my honourable colleague, but it's obviously something I don't share. In addition to that hidden $5.5-billion deficit, which is part of the record now, we also passed a law to ensure that that kind of thing doesn't happen again, so we're being very open and transparent.

We're also open and transparent with our values, and those distinguish us from the party opposite. Again, they are determined to take $3 billion out of health care. I can only begin to imagine the pain and suffering and anxiety that will cause Ontario families. They are also determined to shut down full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. They want to bring their traditional slash-and-burn approach to our schools and our health care.

Again, I say that that is not in keeping with the values of the people of Ontario, and it's not in keeping with the approach we will continue to bring in the budget we will present in this chamber tomorrow.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: The Premier uses the phrase, "History can be our friend." If the Premier truly believes it, then that indicates one thing clearly: After eight years, Dalton McGuinty's government is hard-wired to increase taxes to pay for his runaway spending. It's in your genes. Even when Premier McGuinty says, "Read my lips: I won't raise your taxes," there's a 100% guarantee, Premier, that you will raise taxes on Ontario families.

Last year's budget said "no tax increases," and on Canada Day you brought in the underhanded eco tax to try to hide it behind the HST. You said that's gone, but we find out today that you're going to continue with the eco tax with an $18-million so-called cancellation fee.

Premier, tell us it's not so. Is the eco tax back on the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's talk about my honourable colleague's obsessive determination to make cuts to public services.

I notice that there are some medical students who are visiting us today. I welcome them and wish them the best in their careers, and I thank them for pursuing such an honourable calling.

I want to talk a little bit about all the investments we have made in health care to strengthen that for our families: We have billions more invested in the system, 94% of Ontarians now have a family doctor, we put in place 200 family health teams that are caring for 2.3 million Ontario patients, we're building 18 new hospitals, we're investing in 100 major hospital expansion and renovation projects, there are over 10,000 more nurses working in the province of Ontario today and we have the shortest wait times in the country. That's what it means when you put your values into your budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the eco tax was simply the latest greedy tax grab from the McGuinty Liberal government. You swore in your last budget that you wouldn't increase taxes, and then you nailed families with your underhanded eco tax grab. Now, we find out today you're going to go back to Ontario families to ask them to pay $18 million more toward your eco tax.

The record is clear: In 2003, Premier, you actually signed an oath to say that you would not increase taxes, and then you nailed families with your greedy health tax increase. Then you did it again: You said that you wouldn't increase taxes after 2007, and you brought in your greedy HST tax grab.

Families are saying that enough is enough. They need a break. We'll deliver it; you'll increase taxes. Why don't you get it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's just break down their commitment to take $3 billion out of health care so that families better understand what we're talking about here. When they scrap the health premium—I mean, they rail against it every single day; the only logical interpretation to give that is that they're going to eliminate it. They're going to stand by their convictions, surely, and eliminate $3 billion from health care. We'll take them at their word on that.

That means that we fire 15,000 doctors or almost 72,000 nurses. It means that up to 40 hospitals are at risk of closure, and it means eliminating care for 75,000 seniors in long-term-care homes.

When my honourable colleague says that he doesn't like the health premium, he's saying that he's going to take $3 billion out of health care. I think that's something families want to hear just a little bit more about, so we're going to take the time to make sure Ontario families understand that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The sad reality, Premier, is that families are waiting up to 26 hours today in the McGuinty Ontario for ER service. Families that I talk to across the province say that they can't get a loved one into a long-term-care home for up to two years. Then you took a billion dollars, flushed it down the drain and put it into the pockets of Liberal-friendly consultants in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. There's enough on that to defeat a government right there, with that waste of precious health dollars. Now, we find out today that after you brought in the so-called health tax, which just goes into general revenue, after you brought in the HST, after you brought in the eco tax, it's $18 million more for the eco tax.

Premier, will you at least admit that the eco tax is back on the table for Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's interesting: This may be the first time ever I've heard my honourable colleague talk about a concern connected with health care—because we know that their agenda is, in fact, to take $3 billion out of health care.

It's interesting that we measure wait times today in Ontario. We have the shortest wait times in Canada today in Ontario. They didn't even mention them in the past. They were afraid to mention them; they were afraid to get the answers.

Again, what I'd ask my honourable colleague to do is to stand up in this Legislature—at some point in time, surely, there will be some specificity and some clarity with respect to their plan—and assure Ontarians that they're not going to take $3 billion out of health care,

that they're not going to fire all those doctors and those nurses and close those hospitals. I think that's something they owe Ontario families.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the McGuinty government trotted out the oldest trick in the pre-budget playbook, a trick sponsored by the Enron accounting department. Yes, it's the incredible shrinking deficit.

If the Premier is as committed to slaying the deficit as he claims, why won't he pull the plug on his $6-billion corporate tax giveaway?

Interjection: Just can't take good news.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There was some talk of some good news. We'll have to wait and see the budget tomorrow to see exactly what we're talking about. I think if you look at our record, though, you'll see that we worked very hard to eliminate the hidden deficit we inherited from the previous government.

1050

We have revitalized and inspired public confidence once again in our public services, especially in education and in health care. We were side-swiped, like everybody else, by the global recession. We decided it was important to support our auto sector and to stimulate the economy. Now what we are going to do is put forward a budget that protects our public services, that continues to engender economic growth and more job creation and that, at the same time, puts ourselves on a plan to eliminating the deficit and balancing the budget over time. We're going to do it in a thoughtful, balanced and responsible way. That's what families want.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In my humble opinion, this is where the Premier loses all credibility. As his government imposed $6 billion in new taxes on home heating, gas and other daily essentials, it shovelled more than $6 billion out to some of the biggest corporations around, including $550 million to big banks, through the elimination of the capital tax. At a time when Ontarians are struggling to pay 8% more to keep their homes warm and their cars on the road, how does the Premier justify his corporate tax giveaway?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would again recommend to my honourable colleague a study called Not a Tax Grab After All. That came out in December 2009. I would recommend that to my honourable colleague. She will see that the study looks in a comprehensive way at our package of tax reforms. It comes to the conclusion that for lower-income families they're ahead. For middle-income families, to use the report's language, it's "a wash." For higher-income families, they're going to pay a little bit more because of the consumption tax associated with the HST. The fact of the matter is that we've got a package of tax reforms in place that, among other things, reduces income taxes on the average Ontario family by $355 this year and every year going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier likes to claim it's "good economics" to dole out tax cuts to large corporations already sitting on record profits; corporations like the Bank of Montreal, whose profits rose to $2.8 billion last year and whose CEO got a tidy $2-million raise. Does the Premier really believe that it's good economics for the Bank of Montreal to get a tax cut of $125 million paid for by the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's an old-fashioned approach. I gather it's one that my honourable colleague is going to stick with, which is: As the NDP you've got to hammer business and you've got to lose your objectivity. We're bringing a balanced, thoughtful, responsible approach. We understand that it's important to lighten the tax load on our businesses, those people who create jobs for us. We also understand it's important to reduce the tax burden on our families, which is what we've been doing: $355 off the average family's income tax bill this year. We also have our clean energy benefits there to take 10% off all of our electricity bills for five years. While we are lightening the load on our businesses, we're also making dramatic investments in our schools and in our hospitals. We're bringing a thoughtful, balanced approach.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. There are more than 1.6 million Ontario families living in poverty, and our province is the child poverty capital of Canada. But the big banks are doing more than okay: Scotiabank's profits rose to $4.2 billion and their CEO took home more than $10 million. Yet the Premier is giving Scotiabank a $150-million tax break. In tomorrow's budget, will the Premier finally start looking after the interests of Ontarians or will it be more of the same for his well-heeled corporate buddies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's that old-fashioned approach. If you are in the NDP and you are steeped in kind of a traditional socialism, then you've just got to hate business. You can't accept that they have a valuable role to play in our economy and in our society. In fact, there are millions of Ontarians who are employed by businesses. That's very important to those families.

I would ask my honourable colleague, then, to acknowledge our Ontario child benefit, the first provision of its kind in our province. We started it at $600 per child. It's now at $1,100 per child. It's benefiting 1.3 million children in 600,000 Ontario families. I would ask my honourable colleague: Why does she not support that provision to help Ontario kids?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government's taxation policies are so obscene, they should be labelled "for adults only." Take the case of TD Canada Trust: That bank made $1.5-billion profit in the last quarter. Their CEO, Ed Clark, a well-known insider, made more

than $11 million in salary. Yet, TD—surprise, surprise—is cashing in as well, thanks to the Premier's corporate tax generosity.

Will that generosity be rolling out again tomorrow, as Ontarians continue to get squeezed out of every last penny?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague tells us that we shouldn't be working with our businesses, but I want to remind her about some of the investments we've made to support businesses in her own community. We work with Max Aicher North America; we're creating 300 high-value jobs in Hamilton. JNE and Daqo New Energy: That's 300 new jobs in Hamilton over the course of two years. ArcelorMittal Dofasco: We're investing $44 million. I've never heard my colleague stand up and say, "No, we should not be investing and working with businesses. They're making too much money." We put $150 million into Stelco to participate in their restructuring process. I don't recall my honourable colleague saying, "Stop working with businesses in my riding, because you're helping to support jobs in my riding."

She can't have it both ways. Either you work with business, you work to ensure we have a strong, growing economy that creates more jobs for our families, or you don't.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm very, very proud to remind the Premier and his group over there where New Democrats stand. We don't believe that it makes sense to fork over hundreds of millions of dollars to banks and their CEOs when they're already making billions of dollars in profits as Ontarians are forced to dig deeper and deeper into their pockets to pay the bills, bills made 8% more expensive by this government's unfair HST. Tomorrow's budget can give recession-weary Ontarians a real break or it can keep profitable banks and big corporations at the trough. What's it going to be? Whose side will the Premier be on?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, "at the trough" is a very old-fashioned line. I just don't think it has a place in modern, progressive debates about how you build a strong economy that supports good public services.

If we were doing nothing to support our social programs and our public services, I would say that my honourable colleague has a point, but the fact is, we're doing much in that regard. We have launched full-day kindergarten. When it's fully implemented, that's $1.5 billion. We've accelerated the phase-in of the Ontario child benefit, two years ahead of schedule, to $1,100 per child. We're investing $63.5 million per year to permanently fill in a funding gap left by the federal government for licensed child care spaces. We have launched a social assistance review and we think we can find better ways to work in that regard. We have increased the social assistance rates, I think, six times over and the minimum wage seven times over. So we're doing what we need to do on both sides of the spectrum.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Ontario families saw you use the HST to sneak a greedy eco tax past them and they've had enough. At the time, they demanded that you show them respect and do something about the eco taxes that you added to literally hundreds of household products that they use every day. After you were caught, the last environment minister was fired for his part in trying to slip those eco taxes right past Ontario families. Now we learn that the new environment minister is ready to agree to sell Ontario families down the river and make them foot the bill for an $18-million eco tax cancellation. How will you hold him accountable?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: It's important to remember that on this side of the House, we don't believe that hazardous materials should get into our landfills. That contaminates our groundwater, and that's exactly why we have a number of increasingly successful programs to keep hazardous materials out of our landfills.

The member opposite needs to understand that the fees that were brought in on July 1 are cancelled and they're not coming back. It's that simple. But there were six items that we thought it was in the public interest that we ensure do not get into a landfill and that the cost does not rise. We do not believe that the cost of a fire extinguisher should go up. People should buy fire extinguishers, and that's why our government is proud, when it comes to fire extinguishers, compact fluorescent light bulbs and switches that contain mercury, that we will bear that cost, and we were very clear. But if Stewardship Ontario thinks they can negotiate on the front page of the Toronto Star—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

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Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I don't think Ontario families are really in the mood to listen to the father of the $3-billion greedy HST tax grab, and he's going to nail them with another $18 million.

They're fed up. They've had enough. They stood up to you when you tried to sneak that tax grab through with the HST, and they demand respect. It does not respect Ontario families to try to slip it past them again. That's $18 million of their money.

Ontario families are asking for relief, but you're still trying to make them foot the bill for this $18-million eco fee fiasco. Why should Ontario families believe you won't try to raise taxes again tomorrow or before the next election?

Hon. John Wilkinson: It's very clear that the party opposite wants to do what they did when they were in government, which is to download the costs onto municipalities. We have uploaded that cost.

Once again, the Tories are trying to have it both ways. They think it's acceptable to waste. They said to people,

"We're going to get rid of those fees." Well, where do you think all of that hazardous material is going to go? It's going to go into our landfills and it's going to contaminate our groundwater for our children and our grandchildren. We will ensure, and we'll continue to ensure, that that is not happening.

There will be no additional eco fees. We've been very clear.

But we will not negotiate with Stewardship Ontario on the front page of the Toronto Star. According to my officials, I can tell you that the number that is reported is inaccurate. The taxpayers of Ontario will make sure that if there are any fees that will be paid by our government to ensure that hazardous materials stay out of landfills, they will be audited.

We are not going to go down the path of the previous government that said, "Well, we'll just get rid of these fees." It's all right by them that these hazardous—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Today the eco fee fiasco continues. Industry-run Stewardship Ontario is asking taxpayers to cover millions more in costs for the bungled program.

You've been making some very interesting statements. Are you going to tell us right now that they're out of luck, that in the end, it's companies that will pay, not families?

Hon. John Wilkinson: What is the position of the NDP today on extended producer responsibility? We're not exactly sure on this side of the House.

There are programs that we had prior to July 1 to make sure that used tires, household hazardous waste, used electronics and the blue box program were all up and running. Those programs are getting better.

On July 1, there was a program that was brought in that does not work for consumers. It confused them, it wasn't transparent, and it left people confused. That's why, in October, we cancelled that program, and we said that those fees are not coming back. But that does not mean that the extended producer responsibility that looks after all of our other programs is not still in force.

When it comes to the article in the Toronto Star, I say quite clearly to Stewardship Ontario: We're not negotiating on the front page of the Toronto Star. If there are any payments, they will be the result of an audit—an audit that is ongoing, as reported by the Toronto Star. We await the results of that audit.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's no wonder the public is confused: They can't get straight answers out of this minister.

It's very clear: We have said companies should pay for their toxic waste—simple as that. Your government hasn't upheld that principle. You're about to go into what sounds to me like backroom negotiations on this. Tell them, "Forget it." Are you going to tell them that?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I ask the NDP: Do you think that the price of fire extinguishers should go up? It is in the public interest that the price of a fire extinguisher not go up. That's why we've decided that it's in the public interest that people have fire extinguishers.

Now, the NDP over there have an interesting idea: that when it comes to sharps, to pharmaceuticals, to mercury-containing devices and to compact fluorescent light bulbs, they believe the cost of those items should go up, even though they benefit the environment, even through they're for public safety.

That's why we cancelled the program on July 1, but we're proud, as a government, to ensure that we're there on the side of the consumers when they do things that are in the public good, like buying a fire extinguisher, like buying a compact fluorescent light bulb. I say to the member, if you're for an increase in those costs, then you should be very clear about that, because we do not think that that is in the public interest.

The programs that we have, through extended producer responsibility, are increasingly working. We're very proud of that.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Energy. For more than a year and a half, the Leader of the Opposition has tabled no energy plan to share with this Legislature and no energy plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable member of a statement I delivered earlier. I trust he's going to tie this question into government policy.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. I will—and no energy plan to share with the people of Ontario.

Last week, the Conservatives did share something they would do, which is to propose to destroy the Ontario Power Authority and to fire the expert power system planners who are bringing cleaner, more reliable and modern electricity to the province of Ontario.

Minister, could you describe what Ontario is doing to get the best value from our province's energy agencies?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville raises a really good point.

The government has taken several steps to keep the cost of electricity down through our agencies, and those actions have saved consumers over $1 billion so far. The Ontario Power Authority has reduced its overall operating budget by 4.1% this year, and we've frozen executive salaries. Hydro One is reducing operating costs as well, by $170 million this year. Ontario Power Generation is reducing operation costs by more than $600 million over the next four years.

Now, I know that the PC Party never misses an opportunity to insult the good work being done by public servants, from nurses to teachers to power workers. They take a great deal of pride in insulting their work, and I

suspect this latest assault on the Ontario Power Authority is part of a bigger plan to lay siege to the public sector of this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Minister. Since 2003, Ontario's power agencies have become more accountable and more transparent and delivered value for money to Ontarians. The dark days of hiding yachts and lavish expenses from public view went out like the lights once did with the previous government.

From the Ontario Power Authority, our province's citizens expect tangible, cost-effective program delivery and efficient power system planning. Minister, please tell the House how the focus of the Ontario Power Authority adds value to Ontario's power system.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd be pleased to do that. Yes, indeed, the Ontario Power Authority is diligently focused on their power system planning responsibilities, on conservation, on working with Ontario's local distribution companies and, of course, on administering Ontario's hugely successful feed-in tariff and microFIT programs.

The Leader of the Opposition's plan to kill this job-creating clean energy program puts the boots to Ontario farmers and isn't something that he really likes to talk about; he has his staff and caucus members do that dirty work for him.

Ontario farmers want to participate in our efforts to build a clean and reliable energy system. Hundreds of Ontario farmers are leasing their land for wind and solar projects. Thousands of Ontario farmers are participating in our microFIT program. They're earning, on average, $10,000 per year. PC members have arrogantly taunted those farmers, saying they should enjoy these contracts while they have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Has the minister finished? I'm not sure.

To the Premier: An Ontario PC caucus motion to dismantle one of your unneeded hydro bureaucracies and pass the savings on to Ontario families and seniors will be voted on this afternoon. You in the McGuinty Liberals hear the same things I do from Ontario families and seniors who are stretched to the limit and can't afford hydro increases for smart meters, hydro exports and rate hikes. They want clean energy, but they can't afford subsidies of 80 cents for five-cent power to companies like Samsung that you hand them over to. You've given them skyrocketing hydro bills and a scheme that makes our children and grandchildren pay a billion dollars a year for the mess that you've made of hydro today.

Today, will you support our motion to give Ontario families some relief?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: What the PC Party really wants to do is scrap planning for our energy system in Ontario. It's plain and simple.

One of the key functions of the OPA that they do on behalf of consumers is long-term planning. They want to scrap the OPA so they can go back to the days when their leader sat in the cabinet, helplessly watching our energy system fall apart, with no plan from that PC government. The lack of a plan forced that government to roll out energy generators across this province in fear of outages. Their lack of a plan forced Ontario families to pay $1 billion in their last two years in office to pay for expensive imports of power from coal plants in the US.

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By contrast, we do have a long-term energy plan, and we will provide a clean, reliable power system for the people of this province.

You've learned nothing from your mistakes in the past, and your motion today—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister talks about a long-term plan that is breaking Ontario families and a long-term energy plan that he keeps tearing pages out of by the day.

It's against the character of the Premier to help families make ends meet, which is probably why he has ruled out tax cuts in the budget. From the moment they get up to the moment they go to bed, Ontario families pay more for hydro under the McGuinty Liberals—16% more in the last year alone. The Canadian exporters' and manufacturers' association says hydro bills will go up another $732 in the next five years.

It may seem small to you, Premier, but the price Ontario seniors and families pay for a bloated Ontario Power Authority bureaucracy they don't need is a big deal to them. Why are you voting to help a bureaucracy that no one needs, instead of helping Ontario families and seniors make ends meet?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Speaking of plans, I just got late-breaking news: I just heard the PC Party is now considering moving their policy convention and delaying the release of their platform yet again. They're stalling again, trying to hide from Ontarians the true motives of their plan to cut deeply into health care, to cut—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable minister to talk about the government policy, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker—and to remove planning from energy altogether.

This is the latest in a series of delays in the PC Party platform saga. Ontario families deserve to know what you're going to do in energy.

Let's look back. The member for Simcoe–Grey said it was "close" last October. The member for Thornhill said, "Sometime in early 2011." That leader is not only keeping his plan hidden from Ontario families; he's afraid to share it with his own caucus—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. On Friday, the minister released guidelines for school fees. The guidelines make it official. The government is happy for schools to charge parents fees for field trips, sports uniforms, student agendas, art and music supplies, and much more. If a parent can't afford these fees, then their child will simply sit out the field trip or simply go, as a child, and ask the principal—maybe beg—for him or her to pay for the fee, or drop off the sports team or have fewer materials for art class.

Is this the kind of public education system you, Minister, and the education Premier want?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I think is very important to remind the people in this House and the people of Ontario is that we are the first government in the province of Ontario, in the history of our province, to bring some rigour to fees and fundraising in our schools. Certainly there were fees in place when they were in government and with the previous government, and we are the first government that brought some rigour. We now have guidelines on what is appropriate to charge students for fees.

There's also a component that does enable schools and boards to have a program in place to address the fact that there may be students in schools who are not able to pay fees. We think that it's absolutely appropriate that school communities would be sensitive to that and that they would have an option, within their board and within their schools, to provide those students, in a very discreet way, with the resources that they might need to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister already has guidelines and a policy banning course fees, but we know that 70% of the schools are still charging fees for courses. We know that.

The enforcer—that would be you, Minister—is missing in action. What the new guidelines do is make school fees permanent. The policy will allow schools in wealthy areas to raise hundreds and thousands of dollars for educational programs, equipment and activities, while students at schools in lower-income areas, which can't raise this kind of money, go without these opportunities.

Why won't the government properly fund schools so that all students have access to educational opportunities instead of only those who can afford it?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think that it's important for the people of Ontario to be aware of the fact that this government has increased funding in education by 40%. It is for that reason that, as a government, we are saying that no student should be charged a fee that is directly related to the course of studies that would be required for their graduation. We feel comfortable saying this because of the investments we have made over the years, the 40% investment that is getting directly into schools to support students.

There has been no government that has had guidelines in place around fees until this government. We have worked with parents, with students, with school communities and with school boards to ensure that we have the appropriate guidelines in place to ensure—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is also for the Minister of Education. A recent report published by People for Education is reporting that many Ontario high schools charge student fees not allowed under the Education Act for courses. We know that caring, involved parents want the best for their children. Minister, this practice is not in keeping with the fundamentals of public education.

Would the minister tell me what I can tell my constituents about this? Is this a growing problem across the province, and what are we doing to address this?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We have listened very closely to parents and people within our school communities and students who have identified that, indeed, there was a lack of consistency, and there were inappropriate fees being charged to students to participate in programs. Our government has changed that. We're the first government in Ontario to do that. The Education Act states already, and we have made it very clear to school boards and, through them, to schools, that no student should be charged a fee to participate in a course or for any material that is required for the completion of a course that is required for their graduation. We have worked collaboratively to understand where fees were being charged, and we have made it very clear what is not appropriate for students to be paying for in our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, it's good to hear there are now guidelines in place that will help ensure schools and boards understand how to best apply school fees. Parents in my riding will be pleased to hear that they will now know what fees can be applied and what fees cannot.

Would the minister tell me and my constituents about the process leading up to the guidelines being implemented? Were parents and communities consulted?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This is such an important issue. We thought it was important that we undertake a very comprehensive collaboration with parents, with schools and with students. As a result of that, we put out a draft document; it was on our website some months ago. That was the result of, again, working together with our school communities. We received input from that. We made changes to the draft. Then last week, we put out the final document.

We're following the same process for guidelines around fundraising, and following that, we will be intro-

ducing guidelines on corporate participation in our school communities.

This is the first time that this exercise has been undertaken by any government in Ontario. We think that very it's important for our students and their families. We're going to take the time to get it right so that when we do bring out the guidelines, they will reflect what the students and communities have told us they need—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development. I recently met with the mayor of Iroquois Falls, who expressed a deep concern for his town's future. Thanks to the exorbitant cost of hydro in this province, AbitibiBowater, which operates a mill in Iroquois Falls and also owns a dam that powers the mill, have been forced to sell off their hydro-electric facilities. The mayor's concerns are clear: Once Abitibi sells the dam, the likelihood of them being able to continue to operate the mill is next to none, which means more lost jobs in northern Ontario.

Minister, when the Premier told you in cabinet that he was going to raise hydro prices by 50% in five years, why didn't you stand up for northerners and northern Ontario?

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Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to answer this question. This government absolutely understands how important the ability of northern dams to generate electricity is for local pulp and paper and how important those economics are to northern communities.

I know that Abitibi's business decisions have the potential to impact a lot of mill workers in northern communities. We have worked closely with a lot of the northern mayors; they've talked to us about this issue. Our government formally requested that Abitibi ensure that these dams maintain an available supply of competitively priced hydro to the mills.

I understand that Abitibi has agreed to sell its shares in Abitibi-Consolidated Hydro Ltd., which owns the eight water power facilities, to a Canadian consortium. My office has requested that Abitibi arrange a meeting between the Canadian consortium and Iroquois Falls to discuss the future of these dams. This is an extraordinarily important issue to them. We're going to work with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: We have already seen the loss of over 60 mills and 40,000 forestry sector jobs under this McGuinty government. Due to the combination of a disgracefully empty forestry policy and skyrocketing hydro rates, the forestry sector continues to disintegrate under your watch. This is a result of the Green Energy Act. For every subsidized green energy job, you've lost three good, real forestry jobs.

Families and industries across northern Ontario have been begging for a sliver of help to restore their forestry sector. How many lives will be ruined and northern communities destroyed by the McGuinty Liberals before you convince the Premier that he represents all Ontarians, including those north of Barrie?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Back in September 2010, I did write to AbitibiBowater indicating my expectation that if the company sold its majority share, they would guarantee that they would continue to fulfill and honour the terms and conditions of the leases. I'm pleased to report that AbitibiBowater officials have committed to us that the hydroelectric power will continue to be supplied to Fort Frances and Iroquois Falls pulp. This means that these mills will continue to operate under the same long-term power lease contract that was in place before the sale, which will maintain these mills' power cost advantages.

We support our northern communities, and we know how important these jobs are to northern Ontario. We're in their corner, and we're going to be working closely with them. The town has been adamant in their choice to have MNR act as a spokesperson for them on this issue. We continue to be in their corner, and we we're going to work closely with them.

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last year, Sault Area Hospital was hit by deep nursing cuts. Two dozen nursing positions were cut, and Sault Ste. Marie patients lost 24,000 hours of nursing care. Now we hear that Sault Area Hospital is about to lose an additional six nursing positions.

Why is it that the Premier thinks our hospitals can deliver the necessary care when they are losing the very health professionals who are responsible for delivering it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say I was absolutely delighted to be at the opening of the brand new Sault Area Hospital with the member from Sault Ste. Marie and the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. The sense of pride in that community, a community that had raised enormous amounts of money to pay their share towards the new hospital—it was a truly a wonderful, wonderful event. I want to take this opportunity to say congratulations and thank you to the people of the Sault area for having gotten behind this project in a way that was to me very, very moving.

Our commitment to improving health care spreads right across this province, and it includes the Sault area. I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, a shiny new hospital is no darned good without any nurses in it to provide the care.

We've been through all this before. Our hospitals are placed in an impossible position because of the McGuinty government's failure to adequately fund the front-line care. The government is so busy with their numbers game and their happy, happy comments that they can't see the devastation that their health care cuts have on local communities.

Residents in the Soo want to know that health care services will be there when they need them the most. They want assurances that there will be no more cuts to nursing and support staff at Sault Area Hospital.

Will the Premier commit to ending these nursing care cuts once and for all?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really want to stress that health care is a whole lot better in the Sault Ste. Marie area than it was when we took office in 2003.

The fear-mongering that has become the norm for the party opposite is simply not borne out in fact. We've got almost 11,000 more nurses working in Ontario than when we took office in 2003. There is no denying that—11,000 more. They may want to create this narrative of cuts but they're simply making it up. We've got almost 3,000 more doctors working. We've got 94% of Ontarians now with access to primary care, and we're working hard to find primary care for the remaining 6%. Our wait times have come down dramatically. They are now the best in Canada. Yes, there is more to do, and we are doing it.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Last night, thousands of Ontarians and Canadians gathered in Toronto to participate in the Juno Awards festivities, and last night at the awards show we were reminded again of the talent and strength of the Canadian music industry. The Junos brought Canadians from every corner of the country to Ontario, contributing millions of dollars to the economy. The Juno Awards is a marvellous example of the kinds of events we need to continue to attract in Ontario. It pumped $15 million into our economy.

Minister, what's the government doing—what are you doing—to continue to help Ontario attract these kinds of events?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Last week, the Junos celebrated a very important milestone: their 40th anniversary. One more time to the Junos: Happy birthday.

We understand the importance of the arts and culture sector. It generates over $20 billion in our economy, supporting over 200,000 jobs.

We are proud of our support for the Juno Awards, a celebration of the talent of the Canadian music industry. We plan to continue to invest in other events, like the Toronto International Film Festival, in blockbuster events to celebrate Ontario and in the Ontario Media Development Corp.

Ontario is a dynamic place for the creative industry, an exciting place—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Government support in attracting these kinds of international events is critical. It helps to ensure that Ontario is well positioned to compete for these events as they become available, and that's all very good.

The economic benefit, though, must transcend beyond the borders of Ontario's large cities to our local communities in Ontario. Arts and culture events in local communities help showcase the diversity of the talent in this province. They provide an avenue for artists to display their craft, they helps students to learn the value of arts, they help Ontario families celebrate our culture and they help local communities create jobs.

Minister, what is our government and what are you doing so that Ontario promotes arts and cultural events not only in the big cities but in our local communities?

Hon. Michael Chan: The member is right. We need to invest in festivals in local communities. This is why our government continues to support festivals and events of all sizes across Ontario. Since 2003, we have supported over 3,500 events, from the Sound of Music Festival in Burlington to the Brantford International Jazz Festival, an event with a stage dedicated to local and young people.

These events are helping to attract tourists and providing economic support to local communities. Beyond this, our support is helping to provide an avenue for local artists and helping to celebrate the culture of Ontario, a province we call home, a province like no other.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I've met with you on this subject more than once, along with officials from Renfrew county. I've written to you, I've spoken to you, and you've indicated that you're supportive of the issue.

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The issue, of course, is the extension of the 417 beyond Arnprior. The work that is being done in Arnprior as we speak is scheduled to be completed in 2012. The next logical step for that highway—obviously, after doing all this bridge work in Arnprior—is to complete the section between Arnprior and Renfrew, which is vital for the economic development of my county and much of eastern Ontario.

Will you commit to giving a commitment today, to us and the people in Renfrew county and all of eastern Ontario, to make that happen so that project 417 is not unduly stalled?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite has said, we have had a conversation about this. I think he knows that in principle I understand the concerns of the community and we would like to move ahead. But the reality is, we've spent $2.8 billion on road expansions, road repairs and bridges in the province of Ontario. When they were in office they spent about $670 million a

year. I only raise that number to show the magnitude of what we have done and how we recognize how important it is to deal with our infrastructure.

There are many projects across the province that are in the process of being planned; we're looking at them; communities are interested in them. We are doing everything we can to get on top of the infrastructure deficit, really, that was left to us when we came into office.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, I didn't hear the answer there, but if we've got money—you've made the commitment to the 407 extension—for political reasons, I might add. People in eastern Ontario want to know what's on the table for them.

I've asked you about supporting—for example, your government decided they would have no money to support the OVR, the Ottawa Valley Railway, between Smiths Falls and Mattawa, which is in danger of being decommissioned and shut down. If that actually happens, then this transportation highway link becomes more vital than ever. It is an absolute necessity that your government make the commitment today that when the Arnprior job is finished, they will move post-haste to start building that highway between Arnprior and Renfrew and take the next logical step.

I ask you, Minister: Give us that commitment. In eastern Ontario and Renfrew county, our economic development needs that and needs that today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's interesting that the member opposite is part of a party that is attacking us because we've been spending money on infrastructure, we've been spending money on services, we've being trying to get this province back into shape because when we came to office we had a social deficit, we had a financial deficit and we had an infrastructure deficit in this province. We've been working on all of those fronts and this member has the gall to stand up, after his leader has been attacking us, to say, "Actually, for us, we need more spending in our community."

There is a planning process that goes on in the Ministry of Transportation. The member opposite knows that full well. It is even-handed. It is based on evidence. We know, across the province, there is more work to be done, and we're spending three or four times what that party did to make infrastructure in this province work.

HEALTH CARE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des soins de longue durée.

In every community across the province, Ontarians have been struggling to get the care they need from our increasingly overburdened health care system. Our hospitals are the canary in the coal mine. The problems in home care, long-term care, primary care, palliative care, and mental health and addictions have all fallen on the doorsteps of our hospitals.

In tomorrow's budget, will this government be presenting a plan to address these growing problems?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I think the member opposite knows that I obviously will not be commenting on tomorrow's budget today. What I can tell you, though, is that this is a government that is led by a Premier who has reiterated many times that our commitment is to maintaining the progress we have made in health care and education. Our commitment to improving health care is as strong as you could hope a government's could be. We have the evidence to demonstrate that more people are getting more care; they're getting it more quickly. We know there is more to do, and that's why we are going to continue to do it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: I certainly hear commitment, but it's rolling out on the ground in a completely opposite manner. Thousands of nurses have been laid off. ERs have been closed. The home care system has been sold off to the highest bidder. The long-term care is not meeting the needs of the growing senior population. Up until now, the government has tended to blame the hospitals when they face the crisis that lies at their doorstep.

Can the minister assure Ontarians that tomorrow, they will finally deliver a plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's just remind ourselves that Ontario was the first province that actually started to measure wait times in our emergency departments. No other province did that, and the reason may well be because it's a big challenge to get those emergency department wait times down—because, as the member opposite has said, the problems that are not being addressed in the community do end up in the emergency department.

We are working hard to get those emergency department wait times down. We are seeing some significant success in some places. We know there's more to do. In those places where they are not seeing the success, there's more to learn from successes. But absolutely: Getting wait times down in emergency departments by providing more care in the community is our highest priority as a government.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Revenue and minister responsible for seniors.

When I speak to seniors in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—or, for that matter, people who are fast approaching retirement age—there are many questions and thoughts about issues that worry them, especially health care, elder abuse, retirement homes and the rising cost of living.

I hear most from seniors in my riding that they are concerned about the rising cost of living in our communities. They ask me what our government is doing to help them make their lives a bit easier. Can the minister tell me what the government is doing to help seniors in my riding and across the province?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I want to thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for being a great advocate for seniors in her community and all across Ontario.

When it comes to our seniors, seniors are a priority for our government, and this government has done a lot for our seniors. What would be really great is to see the opposition parties stand up for our seniors.

Some of the things that we have done in our tax plan to help seniors include the enhanced Ontario energy and property tax credit. That's about $1,025 for seniors. The other thing we've done is we've doubled the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant. It was $250; it's now $500. Seniors are receiving the HST transition cheque, $300 for singles and $1,000 for families. We're also helping low- to middle-income seniors with a new permanent Ontario sales tax credit. That's about $260 per senior per year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DANIEL CARRIERE

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to pay tribute to Daniel P. Carriere, one of this country's distinguished leaders and visionaries in the field of health care administration.

Throughout his career, Dan has inspired colleagues and communities with his commitment and untiring dedication to the delivery of world-class health care services. Dan's contributions to Ontario's health care system have reached far beyond his leadership responsibilities in community health care systems. His expertise and advice has often been sought out by Ministries of Health both here in Ontario and internationally.

Since his appointment as CEO and president of York County Hospital, not only has the name of the hospital changed to the Southlake Regional Health Centre, but under Dan's leadership it was transformed from a small community hospital into the dynamic care facility that it is today. It was under Dan's leadership that Southlake Regional Health Centre doubled both its physical and its staff size.

Dan was instrumental in establishing several advanced diagnostic and treatment services, including the recently opened Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, the regional thoracic program and the regional cardiac program, which today is recognized as the fourth-largest program in Ontario.

I ask all members of this Legislature to join me in thanking Dan Carriere for his exemplary service to health care in the province of Ontario and to wish him well in his pursuit of health care excellence at a national level as the president and CEO of the Centric Health Corp.

CARLETON UNIVERSITY RAVENS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to rise today to recognize the Carleton University Ravens men's basketball team, Ottawa Centre's home team.

The Ravens won the Canadian Interuniversity Sport—CIS—National Championship recently with an 82-59 victory over the Trinity Western Spartans. This capped off an amazing season which saw the Ravens go 22 and zero in the regular season. This was the seventh national championship for the Ravens in nine years—another W. P. McGee Trophy triumph.

This year's Ravens have also won a number of the top CIS men's basketball awards. Coach Dave Smart was named CIS coach of the year for a fourth straight year, tying the record.

The Ravens are led by Tyson Hinz, who was awarded the Jack Donohue Trophy as tournament MVP and named CIS player of the year. He is the first player in five years to earn both honours in the same year and, most importantly, he is from Ottawa.

Elliot Thompson scored a game-high 19 points in the championship game, and Philip Scrubb won the CIS Rookie of the Year award.

I want to congratulate all of the Carleton University Ravens men's basketball team players for their outstanding season and another national championship. You make us proud.

STUNTMAN STU

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I just want to echo my colleague from the city of Ottawa's great statement. We're really proud of those Carleton Ravens. Great job to the member from Ottawa Centre.

I'm rising today to acknowledge a great community hero in Nepean–Carleton and, of course, across the entire city of Ottawa.

Stuntman Stu, who's known by live audiences and Ottawa Senators' fans but also by Bob FM listeners, has used his local celebrity status to raise money and give back to our community by advancing many causes and charities. Of course, he is a Barrhaven resident, so I'm particularly proud of Stu and his wife, whom I often see at charitable events throughout our community.

Just last week, Stuntman Stu and his co-host, also a Nepean–Carleton resident, Sandy Sharkey, sold their show, so to speak, to raise money for the Ottawa Humane Society. They raised $11,000 for the Fur Ball.

Last Thursday, Stu was also at an event I had attended called Twestival Ottawa, a fundraiser for the Royal Ottawa Hospital. They again raised $11,000, for mental health awareness and treatment in our city.

Stu has also become a wine connoisseur of sorts. Last year he launched Stuntman Stu wine, with $2 of every bottle going to benefit the Sens Foundation.

Let me tell you a little bit about the Sens Foundation. Among other things, they contribute to Roger's House, which is Ontario's first pediatric respite and palliative care home.

On May 1, however, Stuntman Stu will be taking his philanthropy to a new level. He will bike 70 kilometres in the CN Cycle for CHEO to help kids with cancer in our region.

He has a heart of gold, and I know, on behalf of all of my colleagues in the Ontario Legislature, that we support his efforts to raise money for this very important charity. Thank you very much, Stu. We appreciate you.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I was both privileged and honoured to be one of three international observers in Nepal last week to observe the Tibetan government in exile elections. Unfortunately, unlike everywhere else in the world, the Nepalese government refused to allow the Tibetans to hold these elections. In fact, 10,000 Tibetans in Nepal have no right to vote, no right to work, no right to drive, no right to an education and finally, and most egregiously, no right to leave the country. They're incredibly precarious. They live in danger every day, and we certainly urge all governments to do what they can.

While we were there, we witnessed the army close the monasteries. They put all Tibetans under house arrest on the days the elections were to take place.

The question is, what can Ontario do? Number one, you can urge your federal counterparts, particularly those civil service folk who are involved in immigration, to get them out and get them safe. Number two, we can welcome His Holiness the Dalai Lama here at the Ontario Legislature the next time he is in Ontario. Number three, we can join the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet. They are the ones who sent me over there to witness the elections and to witness the precarious situation of Tibetans in Nepal. And fourth, and probably most importantly, every member of this Legislature can add their prayers to those around the world who believe in human rights for those who are trapped in Nepal at this time.

To all the Tibetans, I dedicate this one-and-a-half-minute little rant.

MINE101

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to attend the grand opening and a fashion show at Mine101 in my community of London. Mine101 is a used clothes store which operates in support of Women's Community House, an outstanding organization in my community that provides emergency housing, second-stage housing and transitional support for women and their children who are victims of abuse.

Mine101 is a creative project spearheaded by Susan Dill and made possible through funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Women's Community House receives more clothes donations than it needs. Through Mine101, the extra clothing can be turned into cash to help finance programs for the women who depend on them at Women's Community House.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank Kate Wiggins, Rhonda Hallberg and their staff and volunteers at Women's Community House in London.

Violence against women is something we must all work together to end through education and by speaking out against it. The work they do at Women's Community House and the services they provide for abused women and their children in London are incredibly important, and I thank them for that.

Mr. Speaker, hopefully if you get the chance one time when driving to London, you can visit the store. They have men's and women's clothes, they have good prices, and all the proceeds go to support women who need it badly, and also their children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to read this statement.

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr. Randy Hillier: The people of Ontario are angry. They can't afford the Premier's energy. They can't afford his HST. They would like to tell him so, but our Premier does not have a toll-free number where people can call his office. Why, when the Premier would have people pay for all of his visions, must they also pay long-distance charges to express their thoughts to him?

On this side of the House, we've been saying for some time now that this Premier is out of touch with the people he taxes. We didn't know at the time that what we were saying was literal. We've been saying that the Premier has abandoned taxpayers in favour of downtown Toronto lobbyists. No wonder nobody from outside downtown Toronto can reach him. This is the final insult: a Premier who not only refuses to talk to taxpayers, but refuses to even pretend to listen.

1310

ABITIBIBOWATER

Mr. Bill Mauro: Two weeks ago I was pleased to be on site at AbitibiBowater in Thunder Bay to help announce a $50-million cogen project that our government will support with a $9.6-million grant. AbiBow already produces around 20% of their own power. That will now be around 60%. Additionally, this combined heat and power project will allow them to use the heat from the condensing turbine to warm intake water for their production processes, thereby lowering their costs. A third benefit is that any unused power can be sold back into the grid, providing a revenue stream for their operation.

Our spring 2010 budget one year ago reduced energy costs for the north's big industrial users by up to 25%. Coupled with our industrial conservation initiative, these two programs will save AbiBow's Thunder Bay operations approximately $25 million on an annual basis. Now, by adding this third piece, the savings will be even more than $25 million annually.

As a result of the new project, 56 permanent new jobs will be created. When added to the 50 new jobs announced at the AbiBow sawmill, that's over 100 new jobs at AbiBow in Thunder Bay in the last month, and

that's not including the jobs that will be created due to this significant construction project.

Any time a major employer invests their own private money in a significant way like this, it is a very positive sign for the employees and the community. This announcement was another good day for the community of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario.

ALGONQUIN THUNDER WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Mr. Phil McNeely: Last week, the Algonquin College Thunder Women's Basketball team won a silver medal at the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association national championship. In doing so, the Thunder became the first team from Ontario to make it to the CCAA final. They also are the first Algonquin College women's basketball team to make it to the national championships. They did so by winning the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association championship to cap a perfect 16-0 season and become the first Thunder team to win the provincial championship since 1973.

I'm especially proud of the fact that the entire starting line-up is from the Ottawa–Orléans riding, including point guard Jenny Allen, who was named to the all-Canadian team during the pre-tournament banquet. The rest of the starting line-up included former St. Peter High School standouts Tina Ethier and Dayna Dover, and former St. Matthew High School teammates Trish Grey and Sandre Bascoe.

I would also like to congratulate the head coach, John MacInnis, and assistant coaches Cassandra Carpenter and Jeremy Sims for a job well done. I would also like to mention Jori Ritchie, Brigitte Gratton, Samantha Lariviere and Jennifer Wolfe-Bard, all from Ottawa.

Making it to the finals of the national championship is a tremendous accomplishment. Doing so with such poise and grace speaks volumes about the character of the players and their coaches. In fact, the Algonquin Thunder won the tournament Fair Play Award.

Ottawa and the entire province of Ontario can be proud of these 12 young ladies, both on and off the court, and I know you will join me in applauding their tremendous accomplishment.

ONTARIO POWER AUTHORITY

Mr. Jeff Leal: Today I rise in defence of the Ontario Power Authority and the important role it plays in Ontario's electricity system. The OPA was created in the wake of the blackout in 2003, which saw millions of Ontarians without power due to the mismanagement of the previous Conservative government.

With the help of the OPA, our government has restored reliability to Ontario's electricity system. We've added 8,400 megawatts of supply and 5,000 kilometres of new transmission lines. Through the OPA, we're also investing in new, cleaner technology like wind and solar. These investments mean a cleaner, more reliable energy system for all Ontarians. They'll also help Ontario become coal-free by 2014, the first jurisdiction in North America. The ambitious conservation targets set by the OPA have saved the electricity system 1,700 megawatts, or $8.3 billion in savings to ratepayers. All these initiatives would be impossible without the work of the OPA.

The opposition would like to return Ontario to the dark days of 2003, when Ontario families had to cross their fingers in hopes that the lights would stay on. They want to eliminate our conservation programs, throw out long-term planning and return to the days of rewarding Tory insiders at the expense of Ontario ratepayers.

Ontario families won't be fooled. They remember the rolling brownouts that were all too common under the previous government. They understand the important role the OPA plays in creating a smarter, cleaner, reliable energy system for all Ontarians.

WITHDRAWAL OF BILL 170

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have directed that order M170, second reading of Bill 170, An Act to proclaim Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, standing in the name of Mr. Fonseca, be removed from the Orders and Notices paper.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROHIBITION AGAINST GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF THE PROMOTION OF HATRED ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 INTERDISANT AU GOUVERNEMENT DE FINANCER LA FOMENTATION DE LA HAINE

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act to prohibit government funding for the promotion of hatred / Projet de loi 171, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration financière afin d'interdire au gouvernement de financer la fomentation de la haine.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is a bill that follows up on my resolution, passed unanimously by this House about 14 months ago, that condemned the use of the term "Israeli Apartheid Week" in the province of Ontario. That resolution, like all resolutions, carries a fair amount of moral suasion, and the word went out far and wide. However, it didn't put any teeth into the intent that I expressed in the resolution.

This bill takes a look at hate, as described under the Criminal Code of Canada, and attaches penalties to the

promotion of hatred at events or venues in the province of Ontario. We hope that it will pass with the unanimous support we got last year.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I rise in the House today to talk about the success that this government has achieved in reducing regulatory burden, delivering faster and improved government-to-business services and creating a new relationship with the business community.

I am delighted that today I'm joined by a number of industry associations and their representatives in the galleries, on both sides. We're thrilled that you are here, because we think it's time that we celebrate how active the businesses have been with us as we change the way we do business. So, welcome to the House, every one of you. We're delighted that you're here. Thank you.

Through our Open for Business initiative, we're saving Ontario businesses both time and money, two important resources that entrepreneurs and small business owners can reinvest to grow their own business, create jobs and strengthen our economy.

One of the many ways we're fostering a new relationship with business is through our business sector strategy. The strategy is based on five top priorities that the industry representatives bring to us during the consultations. The government then has 60 days to find a way to implement these or provide an alternative solution that is agreeable to the sector, and the sector then signs off on that solution. We've already addressed or are in the midst of addressing the top five priorities of the building and land development sector, the manufacturing sector, the medical technology sector and the information and communication technology sector, and our consultations with the agriculture and agrifood sector have already begun. Today, this afternoon, the hospitality sector is about to begin.

As a result of our round table discussions with MEDEC, as an example, which represents Canada's medical technology industry, Ontario is now the leading jurisdiction in establishing a method of assessing and evaluating medical devices before they're introduced on the market. This doesn't happen anywhere else, and now these companies are saying they wish every province would follow Ontario's lead.

The building and land development sector: another example. They requested a simplification of the permit process for the development of residential subdivisions. The Ministry of Transportation responded, and now only one building and land permit is required. Faster approvals are saving the construction industry money. Paul Golini, Jr., the chair of the Building Industry and Land Development Association, says that these changes will have a tremendous positive impact on the industry.

In response to the information and communications technology sector's request to simplify public procurement rules and processes for the health care sector, the Ministry of Finance refined its Doing Business with the Broader Public Sector handbook for small and medium-sized enterprises across the province, an immediate response and something that the sector agreed with.

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As a government, we recognize that we can continue to protect the public interest without creating unnecessary barriers to business.

The Open for Business Act, which was tabled and then passed in this House last October, contains more than 100 amendments across 10 different ministries, all making it easier for businesses to do business—for example, making it easier for internationally trained engineers to work here in Ontario.

The Ministry of the Environment is developing a modern and risk-based approach to environmental approvals. It's consistent with other jurisdictions like BC, California and New York.

We're also making it easier to comply with regulations. For example, under the Highway Traffic Act—I'm delighted the Minister of Transportation is here to hear this; her ministry did a tremendous amount of work—we harmonized inspection standards for large trucks, trailers and buses with national requirements. It sounds so simple, but for business it represents a reduction and a tremendous amount of time and effort—by way of example, through our Open for Business initiative, we've delivered real results, including a 15% reduction in regulatory burden across the government already.

Let me give you an example about what the number means. Governments for decades have talked about reducing regulation. In the past, businesses would hear the example, "Oh, we got rid of a regulation that required the horse and buggy not to park outside of the saloon doors." Businesses would laugh and they'd say, "What does that have to do with business in Ontario today?"

Yes, the number is important, but it's irrelevant compared to how businesses need government to simplify their interaction with business. So, yes, we get the number, but the number isn't nearly as important as the quality. Ask the businesspeople represented in the House today if what they've been getting is quality. That's what we've been working on.

We introduced a new toll-free number to provide businesses with a single contact for government programs and services, instead of 160 different numbers. Regulations affecting businesses now come into effect two routine dates per year, giving businesses that kind of routine they need: predictability and helping them to plan ahead, not married to the website to check every day in case something has changed. That, in fact, was the world before.

We're improving the consistency, quality and accessibility of over 500 business service standards. We

actually took a poll to see what the business standards were like—something no government had ever done.

In closing, we continue to work to make Ontario a top destination for business investment. We want to grow the economy. We need these folks to help us do exactly that.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank, in particular, the Small Business Agency of Ontario. Representatives who sit on this agency represent multi-sectors in our economy. They do important work for our government.

I'd like to thank the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Everybody knows that they're like a lion on every government to make us stick to it, to find better ways to work with business, and we appreciate their presence today in the House.

Our government is committed to working with industry and their associations to save business time and money, create jobs for Ontario families, strengthen our economy and make Ontario truly open for business.

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Every year at about this time, members of the Ontario mining industry come to Queen's Park to discuss the challenges and the opportunities associated with the mining sector and some of their accomplishments and achievements. Today, indeed, is that day. This is Meet the Miners Day, and we certainly welcome all those who are here in attendance today, and also look forward to a reception this evening that I hope all members of the Legislature can attend.

Certainly, it gives me an opportunity to discuss some of the progress that we've been able to make and the work that we've been able to do with the sector, as well, because, indeed, we are very fortunate in Ontario to have considerable mineral wealth, valuable mining sector expertise and an industry that's completely committed to economic success.

I'm pleased today to provide an update on the resurgence of Ontario mining and a report on the milestones that we've been able to achieve in Mining Act modernization and, of course, the Ring of Fire.

First, let me say that a thriving mineral exploration and development sector is an extremely important part of our recently released growth plan for northern Ontario. This plan will guide decision-making and investment planning in the region for the next 25 years, and it will help create a stronger, a more diverse and a more sustainable northern economy.

These efforts will also support our broader Open Ontario plan, which is focused on creating jobs and strengthening the provincial economy. Initiatives such as the Mining Act modernization are critical to helping us achieve our growth plan objectives, and may I say I believe we are on very good footing.

Mining in Ontario is rock-solid—excuse the expression, but it certainly is. The economic downturn, which was pretty substantial, has been replaced by a much-anticipated and a very exciting upswing. Preliminary estimates for 2010 indicate a total value of Ontario's mineral production in metals and non-metals of $7.7 billion, an increase of $1.4 billion over 2009. As well, a great story in terms of exploration investments: We reached a record $801 million in 2010; again, a very significant recovery from 2009, where we had about $536 million—still an impressive amount, all things considered, but it's great to see the upswing. What is even more exciting is that last year's record is very likely to be broken again as mineral exploration spending is forecast to reach close to $940 million in 2011.

Innovative changes implemented through the Mining Act modernization will also help build on this and keep Ontario competitive and responsive in the global marketplace. Streamlined approval processes are bringing more clarity to the industry, something that indeed they welcome, and are resulting in a more balanced approach to mineral exploration and development.

January 1 marked the first in a series of changes anticipated over the next two to three years as we continue our dialogue with industry, First Nations and Métis communities, as well as other northern municipalities. With these changes, surface rights holders can now seek withdrawal of crown mining rights on their property in northern Ontario, and private landowners can apply for an exemption from the mining land tax under certain circumstances.

And of course we are continuing our work and our very important discussions related to the Ring of Fire. It is certainly no surprise that the Ring of Fire has generated global interest since the potentially world-class chromite deposit was discovered in the Far North of Ontario in 2007. Although it's still in a relatively early exploration stage, industry experts are predicting that the area could well see over a century of production. A mine could open as soon as 2015 or 2016, resulting in exciting new economic opportunities, especially for those in nearby First Nation communities, but, as we've said many times, this is a process that needs to be managed very well. We believe that can be done with the leadership of our Ring of Fire coordinator, Dr. Christine Kaszycki, who will continue to work closely with aboriginal peoples, explorationists, miners and all members of the mineral sector to encourage responsible, sustainable economic development in the area that very much balances the need of industry and First Nations and Métis communities.

As companies move forward with their plans, our efforts are focused on attracting value-added opportunities such as the establishment of a ferrochrome processing facility in Ontario and advancing discussions—very important discussions—on infrastructure planning. We are proud to play a very strong leadership role, and we will continue to be very directly involved as development progresses in this extremely exciting venture.

I also want to take this opportunity today to recognize the Ontario Mining Association, under the presidency of Chris Hodgson, for their ongoing leadership, vision and invaluable contributions to the sustainability and growth of mining in Ontario and the great work that we've done

with them as we worked our way through the modernized Mining Act as well. This evening, as I mentioned earlier, I'm looking forward to co-hosting their annual Meet the Miners reception at the Sutton Place Hotel, Stop 33, I believe. Certainly, I hope to see all members of the Legislature drop in to meet industry leaders. We look forward to continuing to work with partners like the Ontario Mining Association to strengthen the mining industry.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

COMMISSION ONTARIENNE DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Ontario Human Rights Commission on March 29, 1961. I'm delighted that we're joined in the House, in the gallery, by Commissioner Ruth Goba, Commissioner Bhagat Taggar, Executive Director Nancy Austin, and Kevin Marsh, the manager of communications. I'd like to welcome them and thank them for being here.

1330

L'Ontario est reconnu dans le monde entier comme un chef de file de la protection des droits de la personne, mais cette réputation n'est pas née en une nuit. Nous avons évolué au fil du temps, secondé par les efforts d'un grand nombre d'hommes et de femmes courageux.

Ontario is recognized throughout the world as a leader in human rights, but we didn't achieve this overnight. We've evolved over the course of time, aided along the way by the efforts of many, many courageous men and women.

One of them was Hugh Burnett, an ordinary man who became an extraordinary leader. He fought for his country during the Second World War and then returned to southwestern Ontario, only to be denied service at a local cafe because of the colour of his skin. Hugh became a leader in Ontario's civil rights movement, and that movement encouraged then-Premier Leslie Frost to establish not only a human rights code, but a commission to enforce the provisions of the code.

Notre province a accompli des progrès énormes dans le domaine des droits de la personne depuis la création de la commission en 1961.

Our province has made great strides in human rights since the creation of the commission in 1961. Ontario's Human Rights Code, the first in Canada, provided us with a framework of human rights goals and standards to aspire to. It was a declaration to all that injustices would not be tolerated here in the province of Ontario.

For a half-century now, the commission has played an important role in upholding Ontario's commitment to human rights, and since the system was transformed in 2008, the commission has continued to help prevent discrimination and promote and advance human rights through partnerships, consultation, education and policy development. By working with individuals, groups, institutions and employers across the province, the commission encourages respectful dialogue that helps bring people and communities together to resolve issues of tension and conflict.

Notre gouvernement est fier de sa longue tradition à la tête du mouvement de promotion et de défense des droits de la personne.

Our government is proud to have continued Ontario's tradition of being a leader in promoting and defending human rights.

Three years ago, our government took bold steps to transform the system to better protect rights and prevent discrimination. Today, anyone in Ontario can apply directly to the tribunal to have their claim resolved. The tribunal's primary role is to provide an expeditious and accessible process to assist parties to resolve their applications. Nearly 8,000 new applications have been received since the change to direct access.

Our new system provides the people of Ontario with immediate access to the decision-makers, and also provides legal support to those who would otherwise have difficulty accessing justice, difficulty accessing the ability of justice to resolve issues. It continues to proactively address systemic human rights issues.

We've led the way in strengthening our human rights system to better ensure dignity and justice for all Ontarians. To make sure help was available to all, we created, at the time of the transformation, the legal support centre. The Human Rights Legal Support Centre provides free legal advice and services to those who need it. It also helps settle claims before an application needs to be filed at the tribunal. In fact, more than 70% of claimants who receive early intervention can reach a full or partial settlement.

Our government is continuing to strengthen Ontario's human rights system and ensuring dignity and justice for all who face discrimination. As a province, we've always taken a leadership role when it comes to protecting human rights. It's one of the reasons that our justice system is envied throughout the world.

As we recognize the Ontario Human Rights Commission's 50th anniversary, I take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment, the commitment of all of us, to upholding human rights here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to the announcement made by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Red tape was, of course, one of the things that we recognized when we formed the government back in 1995 and moved ahead in a number of significant areas. It was also an opportunity for other provinces to look at what the problem was and how to address it, and so we saw Alberta and British Columbia move forward and

today, certainly, take leadership roles in this country on that.

What we also see is that internationally governments have come to recognize that there has been, in some cases, creeping and in other places galloping regulation growth. This government has come to the table late in the game. What I would suggest is that the comments we have today are simply the brush strokes that come into play in terms of the various areas which have been described that the government has taken an interest in. I would, however, just offer the caution that was given to us by the industry group that commissioned a paper on Ontario's regulatory policy. Their caution was that with this announcement of being open for business—and of course I must digress and say that it looked as if, logically, they hadn't been open for business for seven years. The response to the regulatory policy was the caution that with this, Ontario has not yet created an institutional framework that would ensure effective implementation; in other words, the brush strokes looking at where you can make those changes. The 15% reduction that the minister references is set in the background of a 25% commitment that was made by this government. In all, what we are looking at—and certainly, talking to any small business person in this province, they are constantly beset by overlapping and contradictory relations. What we need is a change in the culture of government. Small business needs that change of culture, and the only way is for Ontario to have a change in government.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Northern Development. I noticed that he had his rose-coloured glasses on as he was reading his statement today.

I and the PC caucus would like to recognize the great contribution that mining has made to Ontario and all of our citizens. Mining has always been a major engine of our economy; it drove the development of the north and built great cities. The mining industry is known for creating good, stable jobs which allow Ontario families to prosper. This century brings numerous new challenges. There is more uncertainty in mining today with legislation like Bill 191, which suffocates exploration and opportunities. However, I have no doubt that Ontario miners will face that challenge. And we will make the commitment to Ontario miners that the PC Party is ready to meet those challenges with them.

When the PC Party was in government, Ontario was the best jurisdiction for mining anywhere in the world; today we've dropped to 20th. We'll bring it back to number one. Thank you, and join with me in welcoming the miners of Ontario to Queen's Park. See you tonight.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: In 1961, in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Human Rights Commission of Ontario was established to administer Ontario's first human rights code. The code was enacted in 1962 by the Progressive Conservative government, under the leadership of John Robarts. Since that time, our party has remained steadfast in its commitment to Canada's international human rights commitments and the code more specifically.

For 50 years, the Human Rights Commission of Ontario has been a foundation of the human rights system. The work of Barbara Hall and commissioners before her has helped to ensure that in Ontario all people are treated with dignity and respect. On the 50th anniversary of the Human Rights Commission, I would therefore like to acknowledge the work of those who have worked and continue to work at the commission. As a valued partner in Ontario's human rights system, you have helped to progress our province so that, true to the purpose of the code, people in Ontario know that in our province discrimination will not be accepted.

Today, as educators and promoters of human rights, members of the commission should be proud to know that they play a key role in ensuring respect for the dignity and worth of all Ontarians. To know our human rights is to have the opportunity to defend them. In your work, promoting and expanding our understanding of the discrimination experienced by people because of their religion, race, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, a disability, mental health and numerous other grounds, members of the commission have supported and continue to support human rights. I commend you and our party thanks you.

1340

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, we want to say we are looking forward to tonight's meeting, Meet the Miners, that's going to be held at the Sutton Place Hotel. It's an opportunity for all of us in this Legislature to meet those people who are creating wealth in this province.

I just want to quote something that was written by my good friend Christina Blizzard in the Toronto Sun a while back. Thank God for Moammar Gadhafi. He's done more for Ontario than Dalton McGuinty did because of the price of gold.

Often, you'll hear the members of the government get up and say, "We're doing such a great job. Look what's happening in the mining industry in northern Ontario"—I would say, despite yourselves. When you've got $1,400 gold, it's pretty hard not to have ore. Waste is stuff that doesn't pay. Ore is something that does pay, and there's lots of ore because we have $1,400 gold. We have some good base metal prices.

Despite a lot of what this government has tried to do which, I would argue, has made things a lot more difficult, we're very thankful that we have $1,400 gold and good base metal prices.

I look at our community. We've lost the Xstrata refinery smelter, something we should never have allowed to happen. I still feel to this day that the Liberal government, under Dalton McGuinty, was wrong. We should have intervened on that. The money is in the refining; the money is in the smelting. You have a processing facility in Ontario; that means you can develop more copper and zinc mines. You're able to produce in this province in a way that would have been a lot more interesting if those had stayed in place.

My last point is that we had finally the consensus—First Nations, local municipalities, chambers of commerce and everybody—when it came to the issue of development in the Far North. I think this government, quite frankly, has stood us back and brought us back about 10 years on the file. It has not brought us forward.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Congratulations to the Ontario Human Rights Commission for its 50th anniversary. I want to, however, correct the Attorney General in saying that, unfortunately, the Ontario Human Rights Code does not cover every marginalized and oppressed group. We have three times now brought Toby's Law before this House to ask for gender identity to be added to the Ontario Human Rights Code, and we have the support of Barbara Hall in doing that; she wrote a letter to the Toronto Star. Yet Egale and all the LGBT activists across this country have lobbied this Attorney General to no accord. Luckily, federally, Bill Siksay brought in a bill, and that's now lost. So it's back in your court again, Attorney General. Let's make the Ontario Human Rights Code really cover everyone.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I also want to respond regarding small business and that statement by the minister. Everyone knows Dalton McGuinty's government is not a government that is supportive of small or medium-sized business. They are a government supportive of big business and banks; about $6 billion of Ontario tax dollars has gone into banks. But small business? A record number of bankruptcies in the last while.

What have they done? We had the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas come to this House, and this government wouldn't even meet with them. In fact, they don't even have a minister in charge of small business anymore. They've eliminated that role in cabinet. That's sad. TABIA couldn't get a meeting. Why were they here? Because they wanted to object to the harsh HST, which they knew would hurt their business.

Certainly, one thing after another has been lobbed at small-to-medium business. The so-called smart meters—we call them stupid meters over here—have really targeted small and medium-sized business because most of them have to stay open during the day, when rates are highest. That hurts small and medium business. This government brought that in.

Certainly, this government is, again, a friend of large corporations and multinationals. That's not what small to medium-sized business needs. No, they don't need a government supportive of the mall; they need a government that's supportive of Main Street, and this government is not. You have only to talk to any small business holder and you'll find sector-by-sector problems, where this government has targeted from small butchers to small pharmacies in favour of large business.

Again, it's nice that they've rid themselves of a little bit of red tape, but the problem still remains. We need some help for small business and we need some help for medium-sized businesses in this province, because that's who provides 90% of the new jobs in this province. We need a government that really looks to their interests, that doesn't just look to Bay Street.

With that, I'll stop. Again, congratulations on the 50th anniversary. Please take my regards to Barbara Hall. She is doing an amazing job. I wish the Attorney General would help her a little bit better.

PETITIONS

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Travis to bring it to the Clerk.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Reza Moridi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I sign this petition and pass it on to Jia Jia.

DEVELOPMENT IN VILLAGES OF HEART LAKE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to read this petition submitted by the people from the Villages of Heart Lake, many of whom are here today to witness the presentation. There's over 1,000 signatures on this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we voiced disapproval of the Ontario Municipal Board's (OMB) decision of April 15, 2010, to build a development which includes six (6) high-density, high-rise apartment buildings, one seven-storey commercial building and 42 townhouse work/live units in the Villages of Heart Lake; and

"Whereas this is a small tract in the centre of an area of single-family dwellings, and this proposed development simply does not belong in this area; and

"Whereas our elected officials unanimously rejected this proposal; and

"Whereas the OMB—which is not an elected body and supplies no infrastructure support to the city—has ignored the wishes of both council and the residents by approving this development;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To have the OMB decision of April 15, 2010, regarding the Villages of Heart Lake reconsidered, ensuring the size of a new development is supported by adequate infrastructure and land and that the position of elected municipal officials and the existing residents is given greater consideration."

I'm pleased to submit this petition. I'm in agreement with it, I affix my signature to it and pass it to my page, Gemma.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind our guests that they are more than welcome to be here. The only ones, though, allowed to applaud are the elected officials on the floor. Thanks.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Madelaine to be delivered to the clerks.

1350

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: Today, I have a petition from Bill Campbell from the wonderful community of Strathroy, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition and I will give it to page Devon.

DEVELOPMENT IN VILLAGES OF HEART LAKE

Mr. Peter Shurman: I too have a petition concerning the Villages of Heart Lake, with over 500 signatures on it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we voiced disapproval of the Ontario Municipal Board's (OMB) decision of April 15, 2010, to build a development which includes six … high-density high-rise apartment buildings, one seven-storey commercial building and 42 townhouse work/live units in the Villages of Heart Lake; and

"Whereas this is a small tract in the centre of an area of single-family dwellings, and this proposed development simply does not belong in this area; and

"Whereas our officials unanimously rejected this proposal; and

"Whereas the OMB—which is not an elected body and supplies no infrastructure support to the city—has ignored the wishes of both council and the residents by approving this development;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To have the OMB decision of April 15, 2010, regarding the Villages of Heart Lake reconsidered, ensuring the size of a new development is supported by adequate infrastructure and land and that the position of elected municipal officials is given greater consideration."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and hand it to page Leighton.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that was gathered by Tony Sottile from the people of Sudbury.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service" available to cancer patients under certain conditions; and

Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine";

They petition the assembly "to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sydney to bring it to the clerks.

CREDIT SCORING

Mr. Mike Colle: A petition to ban credit scoring for home insurance in Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a growing number of insurance companies are using credit scoring to significantly increase insurance premiums or to deny home and personal property insurance; and

"Whereas the use of credit scoring is hurting Ontario consumers; and

"Whereas the use of credit scoring is not being used to predict whether customers will pay their bills; and

"Whereas the use of credit scoring punishes consumers who can least afford it, namely: seniors, newcomers to Canada, the unemployed, single-parent families and small business persons with extended lines of credit; and

"Whereas the use of credit scores is not transparent and credit scores are a factor that consumers have little control over...; and

"Whereas 75% of Ontarians do not know credit scores are being used to set the price of their home insurance; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has banned the use of credit scoring completely ... in auto insurance; and

"Whereas the provinces of New Brunswick and Newfoundland both have announced their intent to ban the practice of credit scoring for home insurance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend the ban on the use of credit scoring in auto insurance to home and other personal property insurance by passing Bill 130, the Homeowners Insurance Credit Scoring Ban Act, 2010."

I totally support the banning of credit scoring and I affix my name to this.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I affix my name. These were presented to me by Tim Eye and Chris Buckley.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^me^ France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui m'a été donnée par ceux avec qui je travaillais avant au Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury. Ça dit :

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je demande à Sydney de l'amener à la table.

PARAMEDICS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I will affix my signature to this petition, and I will hand it to page Madelaine.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly, which reads as follows.

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine" especially on Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road in the riding of Durham.

I'm pleased to sign and present this to Devon.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury and Port Colborne.

"Whereas the strike at Vale Inco's mines, mill and smelter" lasted way too long—close to a year;

"Whereas this strike is causing hardship to the 3,300 workers, their families, the communities and the businesses and contributing to a significant net drain to the economy; and

"Whereas the resumption of production with replacement workers has demonstrated an unwillingness to negotiate a fair collective agreement with the workers and has produced undue tension in the community; and

"Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers...."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Jia Jia to bring it to the Clerk.

1400

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it via page Christopher.

OPPOSITION DAY

ONTARIO POWER AUTHORITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move that the Legislative Assembly recognizes the Ontario Power Authority was set up as a temporary agency, but in less than six years it has become a bloated bureaucracy ballooning from 15 to more than 300 employees, spending $80 million a year, contributing to skyrocketing energy bills paid by Ontario families, and has been a driving force behind Premier McGuinty's expensive energy experiments, and therefore calls on the Ontario government to dismantle the OPA.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 3. Debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to move this motion, and I would like to thank all of my colleagues for joining me here today.

In 2005, Premier McGuinty set up the Ontario Power Authority as a temporary agency. Today, that so-called temporary agency has ballooned from 14 employees to more than 300, and of those employees, 75 are on the sunshine list. A full 25% of the OPA's payroll is making more than $100,000 a year. No wonder this bloated bureaucracy is now costing Ontario families more than $80 million each and every year.

Last Thursday, PC leader Tim Hudak introduced a private member's bill entitled the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act. It is designed to root out waste in government and protect the pocketbooks of hard-working Ontario families. It is a real plan to deal with Premier McGuinty's alphabet soup of ABCs, and any grade one student understands how it works. It's called ABC 123: (1) If it works, keep it; (2) If it needs to be fixed, fix it; and (3) If it can't be fixed, get rid of it.

If you want to talk about the poster child for waste in an ABC, well, you're talking about the OPA. The OPA is the brainchild of Premier McGuinty and is complete with Liberal family ties going back three generations: the Premier's former spokesman and, until recently, OPA vice-president of communications, Ben Chin; former Liberal leader and OPA vice-chair, Lyn McLeod; and former adviser to Liberal Premier David Peterson and OPA board member, Patrick Monahan.

When we scrap the OPA, we have a three-step process to move the work to more appropriate agencies: (1) Long-term planning would be transferred to the Independent Electricity System Operator, already charged with short-term and medium-term planning, because that only makes sense; (2) Conservation targets will be set by the Ministry of Energy, with advice from experts, and local distribution companies will design and deliver those programs; (3) Contracts and RFPs will be handled by the Ministry of Finance, which already has the expertise to deal with them.

This is a simple way to do away with an agency that spends $80 million a year of taxpayers' money.

Unlike Premier McGuinty's so-called restraint program—we hear them bragging about it—that merged 14 agencies so he could get $5 million more to spend somewhere else, we will scrap one unnecessary agency and save hard-working Ontario families who pay the bills 16 times that amount: not $5 million, but $80 million.

The McGuinty Liberals have grown out of touch. Today, they're actually bragging that their deficit is 40% larger than the previous deficit record.

Speaking of being out of touch, I want to talk a little bit about the OEA, the Ontario Energy Association, which is an organization that represents people from every possible part of the energy sector. Here's what they had to say about the ABC of agencies, and specifically the OPA and the political interference that it is constantly subjected to. In a survey of their members, "85% of respondents felt that the current structure with a number of agencies assigned to specific tasks either needs better implementation ... or needs to be changed altogether"—85%.

"For example, the OPA was established to provide planning and procurement in the expectation that the market would eventually respond to that information and make investments without OPA procurement contracts. However, these functions are no longer transitional." That's the Ontario Energy Association, which has serious concerns about the OPA, the way it has grown and the fact that it has become a governmental shield, but one that is subject to continuous ministerial interference and directives.

The McGuinty Liberals simply don't understand that to help struggling families make ends meet, we need change. The energy minister gets up in question period day after day, defending the bloated bureaucracy at the OPA, lecturing our party that we should support the things that the OPA is doing, like supporting those ridiculous hydro rate increases. I guess that's what he'd like us to support. Well, hydro rates have already gone up 75% under the McGuinty government's watch; 100% if the OPA has already imposed a smart meter and time-of-use pricing on you. And do you know what? The OPA tells us they're going to be going up another 46%.

Mr. Robert Bailey: That's not so, John; say it ain't.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, it is.

Those future increases are largely due to the expensive experiments with Ontario's energy system that Dalton McGuinty decried when he was energy critic. The OPA makes it all possible, and it has grown right alongside. In fact, it has quadrupled in size in just five years.

Why has the OPA bloated so much? Because the McGuinty government is scrambling to put a positive spin on the consequences of its poorly-thought-out, politically driven energy policies. That's why the OPA spent $3 million of taxpayers' money on an expensive ad campaign in an attempt to paint a rosy picture around the McGuinty government's expensive energy experiments.

Some of the OPA's other accomplishments include $1 billion, potentially, for your flip-flop and backtrack on the Oakville gas plant, which your energy minister is now refusing to admit is being pushed on the people of Cambridge.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: You know that's not true, John.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The original member of the seat-saver club interjects.

A $1-billion tab for your smart meter and tax machines that are driving up bills, and a $1-billion tab to pay Quebec and the United States to take excess hydro.

Today, every MPP in this House has the opportunity to support $80 million of relief to Ontario families on their hydro bills. The PC Party has a plan to eliminate the bloat at the OPA and shift its responsibilities to government arms more appropriately suited to addressing them. A Tim Hudak government will pass those savings on to hard-working Ontario families.

Let's do the right thing. To the people over there: Let's scrap the OPA.

1410

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to talk to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's motion.

First, what I'd like to do is to start the discussion by saying what is in it and what is not in it. Unfortunately, what is in it is a piece of information that's not correct. He talks about $80 million. As a matter of fact, it's about $60 million. So let's get the record straight. They're starting on a premise of misinformation, so I want to make sure we explain exactly what we're talking about here. I, for one, would be honest with those numbers, and that's what I'm asking everyone to be.

I also want to tell you, which they're not going to tell you—first of all, there was no history before 2003. They don't want to be reminded of it, and when they are reminded of it—they're sitting back on that side for that reason, and when they come over here, they say, "We did such a great job." So let's talk about one of those things.

They don't want to tell you that it was actually the Tory government that set up the task force to create the OPA. They're the ones that actually wanted to do it. All of a sudden, now it's an idea that's gone bad and they want to exit themselves from it. I find it rather interesting that this particular party who had a government that was in at that time made the decision to create the OPA, and the fact is, it is a needed one. The OPA has a unique role in Ontario's electricity system because it has a mandate to undertake system-wide, long-term planning, to develop and deliver province-wide conservation programs—a term that this particular party is saying it doesn't necessarily believe in—to contract new generation, such as the successful microFIT program, and also develop the sector to reduce reliance on the OPA for contracting and the procurement of contracts.

Speaker, I wanted to make sure we put on the record what is in there and what is not in there.

What else is not in there? Here's what else is not in there. First is that the Harris-Hudak gang tried to force deregulation and privatization, which saw electricity prices rise over 30% in seven months. That's something they forgot. Sorry, I forgot; there is no history before 2003. They don't want to talk about that. They don't want to talk about a 30% increase in prices in just seven months and then the fact that they failed with that. They flip-flopped again and imposed an artificial price cap costing us $1 billion on the debt.

One thing I want to remind people of: This is the party that, when in government, ran around in trench coats, proclaiming, "We are the guys who can fight red tape." What did they classify as red tape? Water inspectors, meat inspectors. So here we go again. Be careful of what is not said by the members of that party. What they want to talk to you about is that they condemn all of the actions that governments—plural, "governments"—do, and then they turn it into a guise of connecting it to somebody's pocketbook.

So I have a problem with this motion. This motion is basically saying that they are going to be able to save everybody that money by getting rid of the OPA. That does not do a single thing for the public. What it doesn't do is talk about a long-term plan, which this government's done for the first time. They hinted at doing it, and when they found out that it was going to cost them 30% in seven years, they flip-flopped and cost us $1 billion. So add the savings minus the price and you've got a government that didn't know what it was doing then, and it wants to say that it knows what it's doing now. All it's doing is giving you a catchphrase of a piece of information that simply says, "Yeah, that's going to cost me money, so don't do it."

Well, remember your meat inspectors. Remember your water inspectors. Remember the public service that was slashed and burned to the point where people were complaining not about government, but about the fact that they couldn't get service from the government. That's the whistle that I'm going to blow here. The whistle I'm going to blow here is the fact that this particular party is asking us to return to the future. They want to go back to the Mike Harris slash and burn. They're going to take all kinds of money out of the system. They're going to cut this; they're going to cut that. They're going to reduce this; they're going to reduce that. But they don't have a plan.

You know what I call it? I call it a plot. There's a difference between a plan and a plot, and the plot has not yet been unravelled. All I'm saying to you is, be careful of the plot that's being exposed, because if you look at what they're actually telling you, the plot is thickening here. The plot is thickening because there's no plan. What they're talking about is hiding it. They're talking about hiding it. And guess what? They've delayed their policy plans. They have delayed things. Why? Because they don't have that plan.

Look, there's not perfection in any government's plan on any agency—there is not perfection. But what we've got is a direction for the next 30 years that provides us with the opportunity to create, once and for all, our dependency on our energy plans and to correct the foibles that were happening to us before.

So, during Mike Harris's time, demand rose—this is during their time—by 8%. Guess what generation fell by? It was 6%. I can tell you right now what they're talking about is hiding all of this information from us so that we can turn around and say, "We need to clean up another mess that they're going to create."

All I'm suggesting to you, very respectfully, is, listen very carefully to what's being said in the motion because it is a return to the future. For me, it's the Mike Harris return to the future regarding what they consider to be the public service and the capacity for us to deliver good, clean energy in this province.

I think there's a big difference between a plot and a plan. I support our plan; I do not support that plot.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to be here today to support my colleague Mr. Yakabuski, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, in the great region of eastern Ontario, and to support this motion to scrap the Ontario Power Authority.

It's no secret what Mr. Yakabuski, myself and my colleagues, at least on this side of the House—and, I'm sure, with the third party as well—are hearing, and I wish my colleagues opposite would listen to what we're hearing: that people in this province are having a very difficult time in trying to make ends meet and pay their hydro bills, which seem to have skyrocketed, particularly in the last year.

Let me just refresh some of the fees people are paying: a debt retirement charge that we believe there needs to be a forensic audit into, $7.8 billion that's been paid for by the people of this province that has gone nowhere in terms of down; and the HST. We're paying for that on hydro but we're also paying for it, as my colleagues well know, on that debt retirement charge. They're also paying for these smart meters, these tax machines, that have cost the public purse $1 billion.

Now we're paying for the OPA, as my colleague has pointed out, which was effectively conceived at a very early period of time as a "virtual" and "transitional" agency. It has expanded from 15 employees to over 300 in a very short period of time—I believe in about six years. The people of this province are now funding this agency, which we actually refer to, in the Ontario PC caucus, as the "Ontario Propaganda Authority."

Let me tell you why. There's a lot of family ties, Liberal family ties. Remember that show we all used to watch in the 1980s, Family Ties? Well, I can tell you something.

Ben Chin was the vice-president of communications at OPA until his resignation in February 2011. He made $185,000 in 2009. He used to be Dalton McGuinty's spokesperson.

Lyn McLeod—not Lisa MacLeod—Lyn McLeod is the vice-chair of the OPA. She is paid by the corporation. No per diem information is available, but we do know one thing: She was the former Liberal leader prior to Dalton McGuinty becoming Premier of Ontario.

Adèle Hurley is a board member at the OPA. Hurley is paid by the corporation. She is a former Liberal researcher.

Patrick Monahan is a board member at the OPA. He's also paid by the corporation. He is, of course, a former adviser to Liberal Premier David Peterson; and, of course, a famed person from Atlantic Canada, a former Attorney General of Canada, Andy Scott.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It sounds like the Ontario Senate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This, as my colleague from Sarnia points out, sounds like the Ontario Senate.

These public agencies have been used and abused by this McGuinty Liberal government to further the padding of Liberal staffers and former politicians and to ensure that they have a place to softly land.

Let me tell you a little bit about what the OPA has been up to in the past few years. In 2010, the Ontario Power Authority listed a job posting for a position of hospitality coordinator. Let me tell you what the responsibilities include.

In Ontario, people in Nepean–Carleton—they told me yesterday, in Greely and in Manotick, when I hosted two coffee parties in my riding—the folks of my riding told me they couldn't afford their power bills; they're just too high.

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Do you know what I told them about this hospitality coordinator? Their power bills are paying for—or would have been paying for—someone to operate the OPA hospitality program and coordinate meeting room set-ups, ensuring the appropriate room configuration. Apparently, the people at the OPA don't know how to configure their room when they're having a meeting, so they needed to hire somebody for over $100,000 to ensure that could happen. They would order and coordinate catering for small-to-large meetings and various corporate events for up to 300 participants, and they would order and receive and set up catering and beverages.

This is what the OPA is doing. They're more worried about setting up parties for that political party than actually worried about the hydro bills the people of this province are paying. That's why—for my colleague opposite, who is so concerned about the fast-forward to the future—we actually will stand and continue in the PC

caucus under Tim Hudak's leadership and, of course, John Yakabuski's tenure as our critic, to challenge this Liberal government.

Let me point out that this Thursday is going to be a very important day in Ontario. Tomorrow, of course, is the budget. We're going to find out that Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Duncan are going to continue to celebrate being $17 billon or $18 billion in deficit, and we're going to find out on Thursday what the sunshine list is in Ontario. Of course, everyone here—and hopefully, the people at home—understands that the sunshine list is made up of people who make over $100,000 a year from the public purse.

The number of people on the sunshine list at the OPA has ballooned from six in 2005 to 75 in 2009. That is an increase of 1,150%. Can you believe that? The cost of the sunshine list at the OPA has increased from $1.6 million in 2005 to a whopping $12 million in 2009. That is an increase of 650%.

Of course, we're going to find out what the sunshine list for 2010 is this Thursday. We're going to be concerned on this side of the House, of course, if that number continues to grow and more people are on that list, increasing what the public is paying for a propaganda authority more concerned about hospitality than the price of hydro.

Finally, in 2009, eight people at the OPA made over $200,000 a year, including the CE, who made over half million dollars.

I have to tell you that yesterday when we were in Greely and in Manotick, my staff and I were consulting with the people who sent me to Queen's Park. They were frustrated that people in this province, who are paid with their tax dollars, are making over $1 million, particularly at an agency that is not advocating on their behalf to lower those hydro bills, to ensure that they have an ability to pay for hydro, which, by the way, is a necessity in this province. We do have a very cold climate in the winter and we do have a very warm climate in the summer. The reality is that you need your power.

This agency is doing nothing with the transmission or the generation of power in this province. The only thing it is generating is a lofty place to land for Liberal appointees who want to live off the public purse. Ladies and gentlemen, that is what the problem is with this agency. That is why we want to scrap it in the Ontario PC caucus and that is why we will continue to fight until election day to ensure that happens.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for Brant challenged the numbers of the opposition with respect to the operation of the OPA. I have the public accounts—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member knows well that this is not a point of order. Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats will be supporting this motion.

I want to welcome you back to Ontario, Speaker. You were on a mission to Nepal last week, where you were witnessing the oppression of Tibetan people living in Nepal during a time when they should have been allowed to vote in their own election. We applaud you for your work in that regard.

I did ask you to bring me a gift back from Nepal; you didn't. For the life of me, I don't understand why you wouldn't have, but I forgive you. I understand there could have been any number of things that would have caused you—you were busy; you were preoccupied; maybe you just didn't have enough space in your luggage to bring back the gift I anticipated from Nepal.

As I say, New Democrats are supporting this motion. Because of the rules, of course, there are only two hours within which to debate it—40 minutes per caucus. I will be joined, before the afternoon is over, by my very capable colleague from Beaches–East York, Mr. Prue, who will be speaking to this motion as well. Later this afternoon, we're going to be engaging in the ongoing second reading debate of Christopher's Law amendment act, the sex offender registry legislation. I will be speaking to that sometime around 5 o'clock or so, I expect, for the hour that is permitted to me during that time.

It's no secret in the province of Ontario that the most menacing item one can get through the mail slot or in the mailbox is one's hydro bill. Ontarians are increasingly shocked month after month at what they see are not only outrageous but unaffordable electricity bills. Over the course of the winter, those ever-growing electricity bills were accompanied by the McGuinty Liberal government's HST, that new tax that was imposed on everything from being born to dying, including one's electricity bill. That's why Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party have been adamant that this government should be giving householders some modest relief by, at the very least, eliminating the HST on electricity bills and home heating fuels.

Rather, the government persists with its HST on electricity, and indeed promises—and this is a promise we know will be kept—that over the course of the next five years, electricity is going to increase by darned near 50%. Those are the government's own numbers: darned near 50%. So that, I say to you, is a rather conservative figure in the total scheme of things. It's probably going to be much higher than 50%, and that's what has people in the province of Ontario reeling, fearful of those electricity bills.

Of course, the history of electricity in Ontario—at least, the recent history, well within my lifetime and yours—has been rife with outright scandal. We learned yet again in the early 1990s how expensive nuclear power was when it was discovered and revealed that Steve Roman—a controversial entrepreneur here in the province of Ontario and Canada, a Slovak Canadian—the owner of Denison Mines, had a very close relationship with successive, as it was, Conservative Premiers. That's how in the 1970s, while Premier William Davis led the government here in the province of Ontario, Steve

Roman got himself 30 years' worth of uranium contracts with the province of Ontario at $60 a pound, about four times the market price of uranium. Of course, Ontarians and electricity ratepayers were saddled with that huge, huge cost.

Steve Roman became very, very wealthy. He did build a church—it's the big Byzantine church on the highway up to Markham—so I suppose there was some return for the investment by the electricity consumers of the province of Ontario.

But I tell you, the history of electricity in our lifetimes has been rife with scandal. And nothing has been more scandalous than the privatization of electricity and the deregulation of electricity. The Bay Street barons—the Pavlovian saliva was flooding desktops at the prospect of wholesale privatization, along with the disassembly and breakdown of electricity.

There was the potential, and it was just huge, huge, huge. The dollar signs were bouncing off the walls. The corks were popping; not at some corner deli, but at the finest restaurants, I'm sure, that money could buy you a table at.

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As a matter of fact, I just happened to encounter in the Toronto Star last week—they're doing a series of lists. This one was "Five Hopping Restaurants Where You Are Most Likely to Spot a Provincial Politician in Toronto." Number one is a place I go to often. It's called Caplansky's Delicatessen, on College Street.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It's very good.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's a wonderful place. It's called Caplansky's. The article says it's "popular with Liberals, Tories, New Democrats and smoked-meat-loving journalists and their sources." Obviously, because the writer for the list story got his sources there.

Caplansky's is one of the best smoked-meat joints that I've been witness to. It has good prices. The owner of it is an amiable person. I can't speak for other members of his family, but Zane, who owns Caplansky's, is a great host and he has delightful staff there. So I recommend it to you, and it is truly a tripartite place. It's noted—I'm aware of the Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats who go there.

They mention that number two is "Mercatto on College Street, where cabinet ministers are frequently spotted munching on thin-crust pizza." I've never been to Mercatto. I don't know where that is, and I'd rather have smoked meat at Caplansky's than a pizza at Mercatto.

Of course, Bistro 990: I've stuck my nose in the door, from time to time, of Bistro 990—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would remind the member to get back to the opposition motion.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, we're getting there. There are only two more on the list. We're going full circle here.

"Mullins Irish pub on Bay Street, a favourite place for Liberals to relax and unwind over a Guinness after a long day of governing."

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Beats me.

However, this is what I found truly alarming, that this should be in the top five restaurants at which to find politicians here in the city of Toronto: "Swiss Chalet in the Ontario Power Generation building on University Avenue is a hotspot for certain would-be Liberal leadership hopefuls." Swiss Chalet? Give me a break. Why aren't these people identifying themselves? Who are these—I understand, maybe at 10:30 at night you might want to order some takeout from Swiss Chalet. But you notice, "Liberal leadership hopefuls."

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Is this snobbery? Is this NDP snobbery? Is this elitism I hear?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's just not good food. It's highly processed.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You're a man of the people.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're darned right, which is why I prefer to go to Caplansky's any night of the week and have smoked meat served by delightful staff than have highly processed food at Swiss Chalet.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What do you have against chicken?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. As much as the member is making us hungry, I would just advise him to get back to the opposition motion at hand.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The Swiss Chalet is in the Ontario Power Generation building, the old Moog building just down the road.

My fear isn't so much about the chicken; it's the prospect of running into would-be Liberal leadership hopefuls at their Swiss Chalet. I may well have to drop in. It's at the Ontario Power Generation building. I may have to drop in there at some point to check out which Liberal leadership hopefuls are wining and dining on Swiss Chalet.

But as I say, Caplansky's I'm a big fan of; Bistro 990 does a good job; the others I can't speak to. I do note that the menu at Caplansky's says that if a party is of more than eight people "or if my brother David is coming," there's an automatic tip of 15% added to the tab. It says that on the menu.

Mr. Michael Prue: Is there a tipout there too?

Mr. Peter Kormos: My colleague from Beaches–East York wonders whether the tipout is there. I suggest that he go down to Caplansky's and talk to the staff himself.

So here we've got people in the province of Ontario being hammered every time they open an electricity bill, with the prospect of more to come. We haven't even begun to see the impact of the new nuclear projects that the province is hell-bent on embarking on. This will bring with it, in its own right, untold huge new costs far beyond any estimates provided to date.

Then we've got, of course, the notorious matter of this government shipping some 16 radioactive generators through the Great Lakes system on their way to Sweden, which has the technology, or at least they claim to, to

sanitize these, to remediate these generators, to take the radioactivity out of them. So we've got 16 huge steam generators that are radioactive that are being shipped through our Great Lakes system all the way through the Welland Canal, down where I come from, through the St. Lawrence River system. Yet this government will not hold an environmental assessment to determine whether or not it's safe, indeed, to ship these radioactive generators in that manner. We don't have to use our imaginations any more to understand how even a high-tech, technologically sophisticated community can suffer just incredible impact from nuclear accidents.

You hear the government of Ontario saying, "No problem; all the best of luck to you." Heck, they're only the largest single freshwater body in the world. They only provide water for Lord knows how many hundreds of thousands—millions—of people in North America. This government is prepared to put that water at risk and the populations of not just Ontario but Quebec, countless US states and all the way through into the western provinces at risk with its foolhardy—because, part of the problem is, you see, the government has to pretend or create the illusion, in the same way that a Houdini-type magician does, that there is nothing to fear, especially, again, after what we're witnessing from across the ocean in Japan.

I don't know about you, but I've heard the CNN reports indicating that there was radioactivity measured in Seattle, Washington, that's attributed to the radioactive outburst coming from Japan. To think that somehow that we're isolated from this, that we're separate and apart, is beyond naive; it's downright dangerous; it's foolhardy.

Here's a government that is so wedded to high-cost nuclear power that it's prepared to endanger the welfare of the Great Lakes and of the people who rely on them for their source of water and the people who live the area.

Here we are, at six months to a provincial election; Ontarians can't wait. There is, coming from this government, a mephitis, an outright mephitis, that is identifiable. Of course, it's from the decay of a government that has lost its direction, that has lost its passion, that has lost—other than the leadership hopefuls—the core of its caucus. Some of the best people in caucus have been leaving the government without the guidance and the advice, the counsel that senior members give to a government caucus especially. I'm saddened. I'm saddened when I see some of the skilled people leaving Queen's Park from the Liberal caucus. As I say, there are some capable people remaining. These are the ones who are the leadership hopefuls. They're identifiable, as often as not, by the frequency with which they speak French in the chamber, and by the degree to which their French has improved—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Again, I would remind the member to get back to the resolution about the OPA.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —over the course of the last 12 months. I find the government here desperately resisting this resolution, wishing that they had the counsel of some of their members who have said, "Farewell; so long; it's been good to know you." These are people scrambling over each other on their race to the lifeboats looking for dry land, I suppose, and I—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Nothing to do with the resolution, again.

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Mr. Peter Kormos: The government House leader intervenes.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The government House leader intervenes again.

We were talking about the Swiss Chalet at the Ontario Power Generation building.

I've got a scant three and a half minutes left to speak to this resolution before I surrender the floor to my colleague from Beaches.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Gucci socialist.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, she just hurled an insult at me. I've never worn a Gucci in my life.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Those are Gucci cowboy boots.

Mr. Peter Kormos: These happen to be Canadian-made cowboy boots, made in Quebec, as a matter of fact. Does Gucci make cowboy boots? I suppose the leadership hopeful would know, because I certainly don't.

As I say, we're supporting this resolution. I yield the floor to my colleague from Beaches. I look forward to his contribution to this debate.

We'll be speaking later this afternoon to the sex offender registry legislation, the Christopher's Law amendments.

And I will be reviewing the Toronto Star list articles to see whether there's anything further I can provide in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a few minutes this afternoon to speak on the opposition day motion. It's not a lot of time; we're sharing this amongst a number of our members here today who are excited to speak on this particular resolution. I'm pleased to have just a few minutes to speak to this.

I'm a little bit surprised—not a lot surprised, but a little bit surprised—that the Conservatives would bring forward an opposition day motion on energy pricing or electricity-related issues in the province. I'm not completely surprised, but a little bit. I'm surprised there are none of them here to listen to the debate today, but I guess that, even though it's their opposition day motion, perhaps they're not as interested in it as they would like us to believe they are. I'm sure some of them will show up here in a little while.

The reason I say that I'm not surprised, or I am a little bit surprised, is that when I spoke on this issue last week in the Legislature, I made reference to the fact, at least when it came to the issues of electricity pricing in the last four or five years in the province of Ontario, that I was

willing to concede to the Conservatives a bit of credibility on the file, unlike the third party, the NDP, who have been linking every lost job in the province of Ontario to the price of electricity with those silly, simplistic arguments that they continue to put forward. Those arguments had not been put forward by the Conservatives.

I welcome the member from the Conservatives who has come into the chamber to listen to his party's opposition day motion.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm watching you.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thanks for coming, Bob.

Unlike the NDP, at least the Conservatives had some credibility. They understood that every lost job in the forestry sector had nothing to do with the price of electricity. But unfortunately, it has only been now in the last six months or so, as we get closer to a fall election, that the Conservatives have—well, let's say they've gone over to the dark side on this issue. They've now become the champions of lower electricity pricing in the province of Ontario.

Just a quick bit of history; I only have six or seven minutes today. We remember, in 1990 to 1995, when the NDP were in power, that electricity prices rose in the province of Ontario by 40% in five years—8% a year for five years. Perhaps they can stand, when they have an opportunity to talk, and tell us about the investments in the transmission grid or what new generated capacity came online in those times. Maybe there was some. I don't know. I stand here and say that I'm not sure if they invested in new generation. I can stand here and say that I don't know that for certain. But prices did go up by 40% in five years.

They also cancelled every major conservation initiative in the province and did not replace it with anything. They cancelled the 1,000-megawatt green energy project called Conawapa from Manitoba that would have brought about 1,000 or 1,200 megawatts of clean, green energy into Ontario 20 years ago. It would have created an incredible construction boom in northwestern Ontario, through my neck of the woods. They cancelled that in 1990-91, and they paid the province of Manitoba about $130 million to get out of the contract. We would have had that for over 20 years. The project would have started. That province would have been contributing at about four cents a kilowatt hour to the pool of electricity produced in the province of Ontario. The NDP cancelled that, yet they still talk on a regular basis about the forestry piece and energy. I've spoken at length in this chamber about how silly that argument is. As we go forward closer to the election, I look forward to constructing with even more clarity an argument for people that will show just how ridiculous and absurd their arguments have been, connecting it to forestry.

For the Conservatives, I want to talk a little bit about where they were. We remember in 2002 they went forward with a deregulated market. Very shortly after they deregulated the market, the consumer outrage began. It really began in full force. So what was the response of the Conservatives in 2002—the free marketers, right? "Let the private sector do it; it will fix everything; let them take care of it. The invisible hand, trickle-down economics—it will work. We're going to let the free market take care of this." In very short order the price went through the roof, and the Conservatives in 2002 came in and did what? They capped the price of electricity. They capped it at, I think, 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in 2002.

So the people who are listening to this debate and who are interested in electricity pricing need to understand that when it was capped by the Conservatives, you weren't getting a break; you just weren't seeing the true cost of the energy on your bill. Because when they capped it, they transferred the rest of the cost, which they didn't want you to see on your bill because it had political consequences, to the debt. In very short order, $1 billion more had accrued on to the debt in the province of Ontario. So taxpayers became responsible for it instead of the ratepayers. That's how the Conservatives dealt with it, and they thought that was a better way—certainly, they didn't think it was a better way; they knew it was a more expedient way.

What I want to talk about in my last two minutes or so here is the approach that the Conservatives took in 2002 when they moved to deregulate the industry. They were not only going to privatize generation but they were going to privatize Hydro One. So people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and people in northwestern Ontario and people all across northern Ontario should just take pause for a moment and think about what it would have meant had the Conservatives in 2002 succeeded in their plan to deregulate Hydro One. Because as a northerner, I can tell you how much it concerned me. If you want to privatize Hydro One, let's think for a second about what it means when you have almost no economies of scale existing in that part of the province with the provision of transmitting and delivering electricity to the geography of northern Ontario. A private sector entity would have come in and taken over that responsibility, and I have no doubt that within five or 10 years we would have seen that system fall into great disrepair, and I have no doubt that the people who rely on that energy distribution transmission delivery to their households would have been up in arms in a very short period of time, because there is no way that a private sector entity would have been able to manage that and get a return on their investment. They would have been making decisions—either they would have maintained it and seen the rates go through the roof so that they could justify it, but otherwise it just would not have worked. But that's what they did.

On this file, we brought in several mitigation measures to affect people. For the large industrials, we brought in significant programs. We had a great announcement at AbiBow in Thunder Bay just last week—the third major announcement for them on this file. We brought in a 10% clean energy benefit for all people, all residences and small businesses, fully for five years. We've got a specific northern Ontario energy tax credit for northerners, I

think from Parry Sound north and west. We've done a lot to really help. In fact, one of the members of the third party himself has said very recently that the total tax burden on people in the province of Ontario has not increased in the last six or seven years since we've been in government.

I wish I had much more time than I do today on this particular file. It's one I have a lot of passion for. As I said, as we move forward closer to the election, there will be much more to say on this file, specifically with regard to the position of the NDP.

1450

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think the previous member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan should have saved himself a lot of trouble. Basically, what he had to say was a reasonable interpretation of part of the history. The real history: People just open their electricity bill and see how it's changed. That's the real issue here, at the end of the day. We believe that they're spending lots of money. Some of it's already in your rate. He said as his closing remark that this 10% reduction of the bill—actually, the records will speak for themselves on that. They've actually borrowed $1 billion. They financed $1 billion to give a 10% cut in the rate, and that borrowing is actually future taxes. They're giving you a tax break now because we're heading towards an election.

Let's focus on the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's opposition day motion. What it's specifically about—I think it's time to review that—is, "That the Legislative Assembly recognizes the Ontario Power Authority was set up as a temporary agency"—by the Harris Conservative government—"but in less than six years it has become a bloated bureaucracy ballooning from 15 to more than 300 employees, spending $80 million a year, contributing to skyrocketing energy bills paid by Ontario families, and has been a driving force behind Premier McGuinty's expensive energy experiments, and therefore calls on the Ontario government to dismantle the OPA" as it exists. It's addressed to the Minister of Energy.

There is a real history to this file. There's no question about it. If you look back—and I think this history is important, relative to how we got where we are. The history is, while the NDP were in government, the economy went into the ditch. Not necessarily all their fault—it was called a depression or recession.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That's very generous of you.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, they don't control the monetary system. They had some problems on the fiscal side, but they don't control the monetary system, and that's important to put on the record.

They did freeze rates. There's no question about it. But here's the real issue: There was a commission formed in the dying days around the restructuring of the debt at that time because of the overrun at Darlington, which is a whole story in itself—the Darlington plant; Pickering was already up but not paid for.

Here's the issue. The commission they formed—and this is important—was called the Macdonald commission. The Macdonald person was Donald Macdonald, who was actually Trudeau's finance minister. He's a smart guy. He's actually brilliant on free trade. He was an independent, and he had a panel of about four or five experts, Ph.D.s primarily. There were some other capable people as well. But here's the point: They came up to the fact that the assets called the old Ontario Hydro were unable to support the debt that had accumulated, through all governments. Don't ever kid yourself. Peterson was a big problem with this; so was Bob Rae.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Two Liberals.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yeah, two Liberals. Exactly.

Now the point being, they accumulated a fair amount of debt because in the debt, the original—what most of the media pays attention to—was the Darlington nuclear plant, which is in my riding of Durham. The Darlington nuclear plant was costed out to be a $4-billion project, and it ended up being a $14-billion project. That constituted some of the leverage debt. That debt cannot be factored into the rates until the plant actually starts to generate electrons. And so the debt of the previous legacy assets—these are the old assets, the generation plants, whether they're hydroelectric; we could talk about the regeneration of those assets. Most recently, it was the Beck tunnel project in Niagara Falls, billions of dollars over budget, over schedule. It's yet to show up in the rates, but it's in some of the work we're talking about today. It's in this little booklet here.

For years, ever since Sir Adam Beck, back in 1906, when he founded what is now or was then known as Ontario Hydro—his saying was "power at cost." There's a book out there. Read it. It's very interesting reading. OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, is one of the factors trying to unravel the big mystery. But Adam Beck had a principle, and his principle was "power at cost." That principle or policy was, power regardless of the cost. It was an economic subsidy for Ontario's manufacturing industry. In fact, if you look at the profile of consumption of hydro, probably about 70% of the consumption of electricity is by industry itself. Refining, forestry, pulp and paper, mining industries, auto, steel—they consume the vast majority of electrons. And some 30% of the electricity consumed is consumed by the residential homeowner, apartments etc.

The residential side of electricity consumption has very little discretionary usage. These time-of-use meters—it's a disguise—don't conserve one electron. They shift the load. They shift the demand from doing your clothes and your washing and drying whenever it's convenient to doing it on-peak or off-peak. In fact, the time-of-use meters increased the cost of electricity 100% if you don't use it when they tell you. Electricity is about five cents a kilowatt hour as far as the market goes, but the real cost is far more than that—far more than that. They doubled it. When you're using it on-peak it's 10 cents per kilowatt hour, what used to be five. So that's a 100% increase.

But if you look further on the bill, the cost of electricity is—about 50% or less of the total bill is actually

the electrons. The rest is the debt retirement charge, the HST, the delivery charge. All of these charges to have the privilege of electricity is about 60% of your bill. It isn't even for the electricity, so it wouldn't matter if you shut all the lights out; you'd still get a bill. I get complaints from people who have recreational properties: "I've got a bill. We haven't been there since last September, but I've got a bill for $65 for the month." They weren't even there and it costs them to have the privilege of being able to turn the lights on, which is an argument; we won't disguise that.

Getting back on track, the power-at-cost argument of Sir Adam Beck is that we really need to have a reliable, safe, affordable electricity policy. The Ontario Power Authority was designed—and I met the CEO. The first CEO was not a politician. He was an academic. His name is Jan Carr; he's brilliant, absolutely brilliant. On the energy file, there are two people I've met who are impressive in their knowledge as well as their public contribution. One would be Jan Carr and the other one would probably be Duncan Hawthorne, who's the CEO of Bruce Power. He's brilliant. He's always on television, talking about things to do with the nuclear industry etc.

But the history is that they determined that the assets of the old Ontario Hydro were not capable of supporting the load of debt, because of interference by politicians, primarily. Here's the deal: The generation side would be Niagara Falls. We were always quite concerned that Premier McGuinty might sell Niagara Falls. It's been brought up. It's been in the media.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Don't sell Niagara Falls.

Mr. John O'Toole: Don't sell Niagara Falls.

Don't think that energy is all public; it isn't. Bruce Power is on a contract to be run and all the small generators are private business. Who are you kidding? So there's the generation, which is the generation of electricity through water, from coal, from natural gas, from nuclear, from—now they've got this renewable file. We'll talk a bit about the supply mix. Part of the job of the Ontario Power Authority was to design the mixture of supply. We don't want all wind or all solar. We don't want coal. Our plan was to cancel coal by 2015. They promised it in 2007, 2011 and now they still haven't closed them all. So they have misled—pardon me—or misdirected the policy completely. It's a failure, an absolute failure.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, he hasn't even got a clue and he's an engineer. We'll talk about it. He should understand this. He should understand it; he should. Here's the deal: They're going to replace the coal plants. Listen up, because they're going to replace the coal plants; the fuel is now going to be wood.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What's wrong with that?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Peterborough asks, "What's wrong with that?" You tell us. What is wood? Trees are made up of carbon. And what's coal? Carbon. Do you know what? They've gone to a biomass—they call it now biomass. Nobody approves of carbon—nobody.

On this side, we are at least being straightforward with the people of Ontario. This is going to close the carbon plants. No, they're not. They're not closing them. So that's the end of the discussion. They're going to have some other name for it in the future. But when you look at the supply mix report, all experts have determined that that nuclear baseload is very important.

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I have the privilege of representing the riding of Durham, and the area of Durham region has almost all or at least the vast majority of the nuclear baseload with Pickering and the Darlington plants. I'm proud to say that there's a hearing going on as we speak, called the Joint Review Panel for Proposed Darlington New Nuclear Power Plant Project. They were meeting last week and this week. They're meeting in very trying circumstances with the recent Japanese event with the nuclear plants there.

They're not the same. They're not anything near the same. The Candu reactor is a double-fail system. It's two systems where they have heavy water and light water. They boil water, but the water that is boiling is not actually radioactive material. So when it vents, it's steam. It's not radioactive, whereas the other plants are. Boiling water reactors are quite different. There's one single-shutdown system.

To me, those plants have operated and there's been one incident of one death. Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and all the other nuclear things—the Candu reactor has yet to have any kind of major event. I commend the Canadian researchers who have done the work there. They're clear on this: They're going ahead with it. I'm proud to say that our riding is the host, and we're a willing host community. That's firmly on the record. We've been through that debate. We need to have the most robust system, the safest system and the most stringent oversight possible, because this is the source of our energy that makes the province as great as it was.

I would only say this on that part of it: There are three points that I would like to make at the hearings, which I will be doing in the next week or so. I will be on as a delegation myself because I live and work there, and have for many years.

First, we're a willing host community. Secondly, that debate has been held and it's in the official plan of the area, as well as Clarington council. The renewable debate is part of that. The renewable energy debate—when I look at the cost of energy, the booklet here tells us the various costs, from five cents to eight cents.

The real cost is the next thing. They're selling renewable energy for five, six or eight cents, as I said before, but they're paying 80 cents for it. Where is that money coming from? Don't be fooled. The cost of energy is a central question. There are health effects. They say that coal has health effects. It certainly does, and they've costed that: so many deaths a year and all the rest of it—cancer, asthma and all these various things—and it's true. Everyone agrees. Tim Hudak at least has been straightforward about it.

The next issue is that solar power only works when it's sunny. You have to back up all the energy from solar up with something. There has to be a gas plant on stand-by in case. It's the same with wind. Wind only works when there's no high pressure. When you have high pressure, there's no wind. When you have high pressure, you have hot weather or cold weather, which is when you need the electricity. Those solutions may, over time—I wouldn't make a huge investment now. I would keep an eye on the research and innovation in that sector. That's the important part.

Conservation is not getting nearly enough attention and needs more. To help people to shift the demand usage, give them appliances that use less energy at the wrong time.

The final point that I think needs to be on the table for this—it was recently on Steve Paikin's show, The Agenda. Several experts—none of them were political—were on there, and they were talking about energy pricing. This is something that affects every household. I know that my seniors feel very vulnerable about it. They're very concerned about this careless sort of government-knows-best idea that Premier McGuinty has about what you're going to do when on everything. Energy costing in the future—they're forecasting 46% increases. This is not sustainable. There have to be some tools for the consumer. What Tim Hudak has said is that we would look at time-of-use pricing as part of that energy policy thing.

The real issue here, in the last few minutes that I have, is that the Ontario Power Authority has done its work: It has supplied the government with a supply mix. There's general agreement on conservation being an important part of that and renewables being a part of that. Being competitive in their pricing is the big issue, we're finding out in Europe. Feed-in tariffs are very high. As our leader, Tim Hudak, said, you can't pay 80 cents for a kilowatt of solar power and then sell it for five cents. It's just not—who's paying the other 75 cents?

Mr. Randy Hillier: The taxpayers.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's the taxpayers who are paying it. This is where you have to be transparent.

It's the same with the nuclear. To build, to finalize—I think there has to be a full discussion on the real costs, from commissioning to decommissioning, of nuclear energy. We need to know what it's going to cost to secure that plant when it's not in production. We need to know clearly and honestly with the people of Ontario, and during this provincial election I hope that energy takes its rightful place, because it's part of the economy. Without our economy functioning, what are all our young people going to do? My children, my grandchildren and the young people here today—what is their future? Not everyone can be employed by the public sector or be a researcher or a doctor or an astronaut. We'd love them all to be the best they can be, for sure, but by the same token we have to be straightforward. We're all here for the purpose of seniors who have served the country—you can't price them out of living in their own home—and young people who want to stay in Canada and help us all to be a prosperous society. I can say that on this energy motion without any pause for apologizing in any way.

I should say that the previous speaker, from Brant, made a serious error—I've since got the research here—when he said that the Ontario Power Authority was only about $60 million a year. I have the public accounts documents in front of me. Obviously, he was given the wrong material, either accidentally or deliberately. In 2009—these are the audited statements—$79,737,000 for the OPA. They started off with 10 or 15 employees; they've ended up with 300 employees. What I can tell you is this: They have about 10 people making over $200,000. They have some making half a million dollars a year.

In our view—Tim Hudak has told us—their work is done; they've done a spectacular job. Your time is up. When I look at the board, I'm ashamed to say that almost all of them are former Liberal executioners or whatever—leaders, or whatever you'd call them. It's so discouraging. It's almost cynical for the people—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member to withdraw the comment about that.

Mr. John O'Toole: But they can't pay their bills anymore, and they're spending money like drunken sailors.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'd ask the member from Durham to withdraw that comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's unnecessary spending; let's put it that way. I'll withdraw the comment which was offensive.

With that, I'm going to relinquish the time here, because there are other people who want to speak on this important file. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I too welcome you back.

I'd like to preface the remarks that I'm going to make now by saying that before being elected to this place, I had an opportunity, for some five years, to be a Hydro commissioner. That was a real, huge learning experience with a large curve. In that time, I had the privilege of being on the East York hydro commission along with two Hydro commissioners, Bob Currie and Jack Christie, who unfortunately are now both deceased. We learned a lot, and we did a lot for the people of East York in terms of hydro pricing, in terms of making sure the facilities worked, in making sure that there was never any loss of electricity in combining hydro between the old units of East York and Leaside, and any number of things.

I recall with great familiarity what happened before 1998. Before 1998, there was Ontario Hydro, there was the Ontario Energy Board and there was the ministry. There were three separate functions that you had to deal with, not 10. I remember, after the so-called reforms of the Mike Harris years, it suddenly ballooned from three organizations, which had a function that people knew and understood, to 10, which have functions which are really quite arcane in nature.

I remember the kind of rationale for having 10 organizations, or the rationale that the government tried to put forward. Nobody bought it at that time, in 1997, when it was being introduced. Nobody bought it within the entire electricity system in Ontario. And certainly the meetings that we had with other commissioners across Ontario all said the same thing: "This is going to turn into a complete mess," which it did.

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Now I'm here today listening to my Conservative colleagues and they're putting forward this motion and I'm reminded too of Tommy Douglas. One of his most famous sayings was, "Dream no small dreams." The Conservatives here have a small dream. They want to get rid of one organization, the OPA, and I'm suggesting that we ought to look far bigger than that. We should be looking to go back to the way it was before 1998, when this whole thing was messed up in the first place. Maybe we should start talking about going back to one system with Ontario Hydro, with the OEB setting the rates. It has to be separate because it's almost like a court of separate jurisdictions, setting the rates that are fair to the company, the consumer and the ministry. After all, the ministry is the tail that wags the dog. All these other things are superfluous.

I'm going to support the Conservative motion because it's a little, tiny step in the right direction, but I think that what we really need here and what the people of Ontario would demand is a wholesale change to the way we do business here in Ontario.

As has been said here already today, the most frightful thing that comes in the mail every month is the hydro bill. I do know that when I open up the hydro bill and discuss it with my wife, we both are perplexed, in spite of the fact that I work here and in spite of the fact that she has an MBA. We are perplexed when we look at that bill and we see all the charges. It's hard to understand where all of those charges come from. If we don't understand it or if we have to question it, what does the general public think of all that? They see the bottom line and they don't like the bottom line, but how did we get there?

We got there because we now have 10 separate bodies regulating what two used to do before, and I think we need to change that and we need to go back. We need closer integration with the integrated planning functions so that Ontario Hydro is again great.

The whole time that I was a hydro commissioner, and in fact throughout almost all of my life, I don't ever remember a brownout. I hear members of this Legislature talking about brownouts all the time. I remember blackouts. I remember what happened to the Eves government when, you know—but that wasn't even the Conservatives' fault. That happened in Ohio. But I remember that. I remember blackouts. I remember the big one across the eastern seaboard when I was in my teen years. But I don't remember brownouts.

I hear all the time in this House people talking about how we have to produce all this excess electricity which is being given away to the Americans and Quebec; we're paying them to take it. Every week for the last couple of years, I open up the Toronto Star, as I am wont to do every morning, and once a week they have the electricity across the province for the week before. They show the peaks and the valleys of the electricity; they show the amount that is being produced; they show the average retail cost. I have to tell you, we're producing 25,000 megawatts of power every day consistently in Ontario and we're using between 15,000 and 18,000 megawatts every day, depending on the valley or the peak. Very few days do we ever get up to that 20,000 range, which is only using 80% of what we are producing ourselves. If you ask, "How much are we importing electricity into this province?" the answer is virtually nil.

So then you have governments that are turning around and saying, "We need to spend billions of dollars on new nuclear for some unforeseen circumstance 20 years down the road." New Democrats reject that. We reject that because we know how much this has cost the government in the past. We know that every single nuclear experiment and plant in this province over my lifetime has gone over budget. We know that Rolphton went two times over budget; we know that Douglas Point was 50% over budget; we know that Pickering A was 50% over budget; we know that Bruce Nuclear was two times, or 200%, over budget; we know that Darlington started out at $4 billion and ended up at $14 billion, which is 250% over budget. And then people turn on the other side and say, "Our future is nuclear. Let's build some more."

Take away all the problems of what do you do with the waste and spent fuel; take away all the problems about potential disasters, which we've seen in Japan; take that all away and just look at the costs. Does it make economic sense for this province to go down that road if we cannot control the cost of the construction, if we cannot control the cost of actually operating the plant? New Democrats have consistently said no, because every single time you get your hydro bill and you open up that bill, if you look down you'll see that we're paying a debt retirement charge.

Members here know what the debt retirement charge is for: It's for all those nuclear plants. That's mostly what it is for. The reason Ontario Hydro got itself into a debt and a problem was because they were carrying the burden of all these nuclear plants that went over budget two times, 50%, 200%, 300% more than what they should have cost.

If that wasn't bad enough, when you open up your energy bill each and every month, you'll see that not only do you pay down that debt, not only are you forced to pay down the debt which the consumers themselves did not make, but there's HST added to it. This is the first time in my entire career as a politician I have seen debt charges taxed. I don't know where the government gets off doing this. Perhaps somebody will comment on this. Where does a government get off taxing a debt charge?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: GST was on it.

Mr. Michael Prue: GST—ah, yes, my friend reminds me. Of course, this government is in lockstep with their

heroes, the Conservatives in Ottawa. If the government could put the GST on it then this government can put HST on that same debt. If people wonder why their bills are going up—

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: —and I'm hearing moaning all around me from the government benches—then look at that, because there's an additional 8% charge for the whole thing, including the debt.

We, as I said, are supporting this because it's one tiny little step. We think, quite clearly, that a whole lot can be done, as was done before. We think that Hydro One now has planning and transmission upgrades as major responsibilities and they need to continue to plan and to upgrade our transmission lines. There is no doubt that that needs to be done here in Ontario.

I got myself in some political hot water when I first arrived here back in 2001, when I was debating about hydro and policy and what to do, and into the election in 2003, by saying something which was kind of radical at the time, and I guess that was the hydro commissioner in me coming out. It was to say that the public should be expected to pay for the cost of the electricity. What a radical thought that was, because governments were subsidizing everything. I still to this day believe that consumers should pay the realistic cost. The problem isn't paying the cost; the problem that consumers have, I think, is the unfair taxes that are put on it, or that the energy, in particular hydro, is taxed at all. We, as New Democrats, find that that is the most egregious thing that is happening here, not the cost of producing the electricity—although I'm going to get to that in a minute—but the fact that it is taxed at all.

In terms of the production of electricity, we believe that we should be using every form of green electricity production that is available and that is known. Some of it is more expensive; yes, it is. Some of it is more expensive than burning coal or natural gas. It is obviously much more expensive than water power coming out of Niagara Falls or any other place where water naturally flows or falls, and that is always the cheapest form of electricity. Something like windmills: This government has signed contracts—among the most lucrative contracts in all of North America, in fact, all of the world—paying 15 to 18 cents per kilowatt hour. That is much higher, quite literally, than almost every other jurisdiction in North America is paying for wind power at this point. I understand how the government wanted to get going, but I think they've overextended themselves, and they've also paid too much for this green energy. It can be produced and is being produced elsewhere for much cheaper amounts of money.

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Also, this government has looked to solar. I think the sun is obviously the ultimate source of all power, at least in our solar system, and solar's a good idea. But producing electricity with the technology we have today does not necessarily make good economic sense. If you have to pay 80 cents per kilowatt hour for solar, then we ought not to be doing it. Even if you can get it for 60 cents or 50 cents, we ought not to be doing it. We should be looking at other forms.

Now, solar is a wonderful thing. You can go to apartment buildings here in the city of Toronto, and I have some of them in my own riding, that put solar instruments on the top of the apartment building, but they're not for electricity; they're to heat the water. It is marvellously, absolutely marvellously, efficient. There are companies in this city that will put all of the mechanisms on the top of the roof, and they will charge the apartment building the equivalent of what the natural gas would have been to heat the water to that level. There are instruments. They can tell. It costs absolutely nothing to the people who live in the building other than what they would have spent on natural gas in the first place to heat the water.

I think that's a great idea. I would love to see those on top of every government building, on top of every school, on top of every apartment building or large edifice. In Canada, I would even like to see in households things that you see all over most of Israel or what we call the Third World: If you go there, you'll see little water heaters on every single roof. Everybody's responsible for their own water heat, and it's on everybody's roof. It heats the water. It's sufficient for the families. Once it's installed, it costs virtually nothing to pay for.

That's what we should be looking at. Those are the kinds of investments we should be making here in Ontario.

As I said, back before 1998, we had one utility that planned and did almost everything, other than the OEB, which set the rates. We had a ministry which sort of guided, looked along and made the rules in order that it all worked—1998. Of course, that all came crashing down, and it particularly came crashing down in 2002. I was here. I watched, to my chagrin, as a government stood in its place and announced they were going to privatize the whole electricity system. I remember the hoots and howls coming from the New Democratic members. I also remember then-opposition leader, now Premier McGuinty, standing in his place and saying it was a good thing. I don't know if the Liberals remember that, or want to remember how the first reaction of Mr. McGuinty, then opposition leader, now Premier, was that privatization of hydro was a good thing. He recanted after a few days because the pressure was so enormous, but that was his initial reaction.

I was very pleased and somewhat surprised and overwhelmed when the courts of this province shot the whole thing down. They recognized it was an illegal action being taken by the government of Ontario and that it was not sustainable, given all the laws under which the cabinet had to operate. They shot it down and we were saved. But in the saving, we ended up with 10 new mini-bodies which were not coordinated at all.

New Democrats believe that we have to go back to what there was. There is a need for coordination. There is a need for Hydro One. There is a need for an Ontario

Energy Board that can set the rates. But there is also a need in this province for us to look at alternatives to building new nuclear, or any kind of energy production at all. As I said, if we are producing 25,000 megawatts today and we are using between 15,000 and 18,000, do we really need to spend all this money? We are still paying off debts that are generations old. We are adding to debts every day, and we have a $17-billion or $19-billion deficit which we're going to hear more about tomorrow. Do we really need to add debts to hydro? It would be my contention that we need to do important things so that we can actually reduce even the 15,000 megawatts to 18,000 megawatts we're using today—things like Energy Star appliances. This government, when they brought in the HST, took that right out. That was a backward step. With Energy Star appliances, we could have individuals, homeowners, factories, people who rely on these appliances buying the very best appliances they can. The HST would not be charged. That would save them 13%, and of course they would want to go out and do that.

We also have to see that the rebates on energy efficient homes—LEEPs. A LEEP home uses between 42% and 45% less energy than the average home and they are more efficient; we need to give rebates to those types of homes being built. As I said already, we need to give rebates when people put hot water facilities on their roofs. We need to give rebates when things are properly insulated. If we can get our energy consumption level down to that of most of the European nations, that would probably be 11,000 megawatts to 12,000 megawatts. We would be producing twice as much. We would have years and years and years that we wouldn't need to build new facilities like mega-nuclear plants that are probably going to go over budget and I think are worrying to many people.

I also want to talk a little bit about the government smart meter program, because I think quite clearly it's not working. It's not having the intended effect that most people and most government members, when they talked about it—I warned them, as a hydro commissioner. Jack Christie set up one of these smart meters, the very first one I had ever seen or heard of when I was on the hydro commission before 1997. He put one into his home and we took five other homes at random and put them into the homes and told people how they worked and told people that if they used electricity between these hours we were going to notate them. We were going to try to get people off the peak and see how it worked. It didn't work. I said the same thing to the Legislature a couple of years ago: It did not work.

Jack Christie and his wife were, by then, into their 80s. He was quite a conservationist. He did his dishes and all the things at night. He didn't have any small children at home. He did the washing after 9 o'clock at night. He did all of those things. At the end of the two months his hydro bill was down almost $2. We had other people who had children and families we used as test groups and their bills went up. Their bills went up anywhere between $2 and $5 for the two months. But it told me, and I tried to convey this to the Legislature, that smart meters are not going to work in terms of saving money. People cannot change their habits. The children have to be fed in the morning; the coffee has to be put on to get ready to go to work; people want to have showers and do all the things that they normally do—they have lives to live—that cannot be put off to the weekend or after 9 o'clock at night. So for that reason, I don't think these are ever going to work.

But at the same time, there are programs that can work and reduce electricity in peak times. One of the best is Peaksaver. I signed up for that program the moment it came to my house. I thought it was one of the most innovative and intelligent things to do. That is, if you have air conditioning, and many people in Ontario do, you give permission to the hydro company to shut down the air conditioning when you get close to that 25,000 megawatts, when you have to import it from somewhere else. You give them permission to shut it down and you can turn it on later at night. In the couple of years that I've had that, they've shut it down two or three times; that's all. That made sure we didn't go over. That's the kind of innovative thing that we should be looking at here in the province of Ontario, but Peaksaver is not being used or even being promoted that much by this government. Certainly, if you can shave off everything above 25,000 megawatts in the summertime, which is the high time that we're using it now, then it will make a substantial difference in terms of how much we have to pay on our hydro bills because we won't have to use imported energy.

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In the 45 seconds that are left, I just want to state to my colleagues in the Conservative Party that we will be supporting this resolution. We don't think it goes nearly far enough, but at least they are looking at ways of cutting the cost to the ordinary consumer.

I would only ask that the government opposite do the same thing. Embrace the idea that I have given to you. Why do we need 10 separate organizations that all have their finger in the pie? When you get your bill, you can see the results of all of that. We need to start doing more and more things to help ordinary people in Ontario. This is getting to be a very expensive place in which to live.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion. As I have been sitting here listening to the debate that's taking place on this particular motion, it kind of took me back to the summer of 2003. I started reminiscing about the blackout. I think everybody remembers the blackout. I'm sure everybody has a story about the blackout, as to what they were doing. It's almost like other big events that happen in our life; we have sort of a trigger moment.

I remember that late afternoon/early evening very clearly, when the lights went out and there was no explanation for it. Not only did the lights go out; I remem-

ber my phone wasn't working. The lights went out, and all our neighbours came out and we were trying to talk to each other and were not getting any news. So I thought I'd call my mom to see what was going on, and I wasn't able to connect to her.

It was kind of funny. Finally, a few hours later, I was able to talk to my mother, and she tells me and we heard the news that this was bigger than Ottawa—that, lo and behold, in Oakville, where she lives, it was the same thing. They were sitting in darkness and they had no idea as to what was going on. And we kind of chuckled. The reason my mother and I chuckled when we were talking was that it kind of reminded us of the time when we lived in Pakistan. This kind of stuff used to happen all the time. We were like, "Wow, so here we are living in Canada and there's this major blackout that is taking place and the system is down."

In my case, I lived in darkness for about three days and three nights, as I recall. Thank God you could find restaurants which had propane and stuff like that, to feed yourself; thankfully, I had the financial wherewithal to do that. But it did really cause significant hardship, and most importantly, it really caused significant hardship to our businesses.

I've had the opportunity to look at the economic charts where you see GDP up and down and business activity, and if you look at Ontario, besides all the normal recessions and peaks and valleys, there is one significant dip you see. It's around that particular blackout, because it had a significant impact on our economy, the result of the fact that our electricity system in this province was not able to withstand a power shutdown from the United States of America.

The system was overloaded. It was a hot, hot summer. I remember it distinctly. It was August; I think it was August 14. That's it—it was my mother's birthday, August 14. I was trying to call her to wish her a happy birthday and I wasn't able to do so because everything was shut down. I think I'm emotionally traumatized since that day because of that experience; that is a big thing. But—

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I will send her flowers.

It was a significant thing because our system was not up to snuff. Our system was not able to take the burden on it. It was because the previous government, or the government in power at that time, the Conservative government, was not making any investment whatsoever in our system, and it was really what caused a significant impact not only on the province, but especially on the provincial economy.

Since the McGuinty government came into office in the fall of 2003, the government has been making a lot of investments. We've talked about putting in 8,000 megawatts of new generation, spending roughly $8 billion to do so; and investing about $7 billion in getting about 5,000 kilometres of new transmission. That is to ensure that we have an electricity generation and distribution system in the province which really belongs to the 21st century. What a surprise, folks, that somehow we couldn't continue on with an electricity system that was built in the 20th century: that somehow we learned all of a sudden that those wooden poles just couldn't last forever; that we had to make sure that we upgraded our electricity generation system in our rural areas. That's the kind of investment we are making.

Let me speak to the issue around OPA. That is an important issue. What are the three big purposes, the mandate, of OPA? One is to undertake system-wide, long-term planning—and I talked about making sure that we have the right set of planning around generation and distribution of electricity. But two other functions, which are really important to my constituents, are around province-wide conservation programs and around new generation, especially through renewable sources. In my riding of Ottawa Centre, these are two really important issues. I hear from my constituents again and again: They want good conservation programs because they want to participate in reducing the use of electricity. They want to ensure that they are reducing their consumption. That is a function of the OPA. It is an important organization for ensuring that we have robust conservation programs in the province, and that those conservation programs are easily understandable and applicable to Ontarians.

I think we're starting to see the results as to the conservation programming that has been done in the last six years. We have seen that we have achieved conservation of 1,700 megawatts in peak demand savings. That's equivalent to 500,000 homes; that's more than Ottawa. Five hundred thousand homes is more than Ottawa in terms of the savings we have seen in reduced consumption because of the programs that OPA has put into place. That has saved ratepayers, those who use electricity, $3.8 billion in avoided system costs—$3.8 billion is a significant number.

OPA's plan, and this goes to its long-term planning in terms of conservation, is a target of about 7,100 megawatts of reduction in peak demand, or peak usage, by 2030. That is equivalent to 2.4 million homes off the grid. That is significant. That is the best way of saving money in terms of not using those dollars in new generation to meet the demand. And the demand is going up. I think we all have to recognize that demand is going up. Just look around your home at the number of electronic gadgets we use, from iPods to iPads to BlackBerrys to our stereos, and big flat-screen televisions which consume more energy than the old TVs used to do. Many, many homes now have more than one television: They have one in the living room and one in the bedroom, and sometimes they have one in the basement. One of my friends—I'm sure he's not watching—I think he's got four televisions in his home, which is beyond my comprehension. All of this has a significant impact on our electricity consumption.

My time is running short, so I'm going to address one other important point, which is around the role of OPA in new, renewable sources of energy, in terms of managing the FIT and microFIT programs. About two months ago,

along with the Glebe Community Association, which is one of the very active community associations in the city of Ottawa, I hosted a community session on how best to take advantage of the microFIT program, and how homeowners who were interested can install solar panels at their home. We had over 100 people attend that session. It was all afternoon on a Saturday. People stayed from the beginning to the end. We had about 10 or 12 different vendors who were present; Hydro Ottawa was also there. It was an extremely successful session. We had one of the actual homeowners who is part of the microFIT program there to talk about her experience. I constantly hear from my constituents who want to participate in the microFIT program. They want to enter into an agreement with OPA to be able to generate electricity because they understand the benefits.

1540

The more we can invest in renewable sources, the more we can get away from using coal and make sure that we all can play a role, locally, in the generation of electricity. That is because of the Green Energy Act and that is because of the function of OPA. There is some significant utility to this organization.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, conservation and the use of the microFIT program are extremely important. That is why to have an organization like this is important and is value for taxpayers' dollars.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to rise and speak regarding our motion to scrap the Ontario Power Authority, the OPA.

Before I engage in that debate, I was listening to the Liberal member from Ottawa Centre, who was just speaking, and I think it's interesting how the member was telling this House how he was traumatized when it was dark and he couldn't use the phone. Would it be unfair to suggest that the member from Ottawa Centre may be a trauma queen? I don't know.

But I think that may be what is happening with all the Liberals and our health care system: Whenever the sun goes down, it's such a traumatic experience for them all that our health care system gets overloaded until the sun rises in the morning, possibly.

Let's go back to the Ontario Power Authority and this Liberal government. Let's recognize that the Ontario Power Authority is just one of over 600 unelected, unaccountable agencies, boards and commissions that this Liberal government has sicced upon the people of this province.

Really, the only role for these agencies, boards and commissions is to allow the Liberal government to hide from the taxpayers of this province, allow the Liberal government to obscure from the taxpayers who's making decisions in this province. It creates that thickening layer of fog and confusion between who has power and who's using it.

Let me recall a story: Last summer in Toronto, when this Legislative Assembly hosted the midwestern state and provincial leaders' conference, a vice-president from the OPA was at that conference. He spoke about energy and he said to the conference, "We in Ontario have made a conscious decision to go to green energy, and it's going to cost us all more."

What happened after that? A legislator from Nebraska stood up and asked this vice-president of the OPA, "How does industry react to that statement about rising and increasing energy costs?" The vice-president said, "We've made a conscious decision in this province that if your industry requires a significant amount of energy, this is not the province for you to do business in."

We never had that debate. I never heard that debate, and I challenge anybody in this House: When did we debate that industry has no place in this province? But that's what the OPA vice-president said to the midwestern state conference just last summer in Toronto.

Really and truly, that's the Liberal conservation plan. If the Liberals have a conservation plan, that's it: Drive industry out of this province, and that way we'll use less energy. That's their conservation plan. Nobody else can compete here, and one has to look no further than last May with Xstrata up in Timmins. They left this province because of energy costs. They didn't go to Mexico; they went to Quebec, where hydro costs are a third of what they are here.

This Ontario Power Authority is nothing more than a bloated bureaucracy. It has gone from 15 to 300 employees in five years. It has gone up to $300 million in expenses to run it. Its expenses are up 465% in five years. Its sunshine list has gone up over 1,000%. It's this McGuinty Liberal government that's building bureaucratic empires, and they're using the agency boards and commissions to do it.

This is just one small step we're proposing here today: to get rid of one incompetent agency that provides no value to anybody in this province except the Premier and the Minister of Energy, so that they can hide from the truth, so that they can hide from the taxpayers of this province while the Liberal smart meter just keeps cranking up the costs to the people of Ontario; cranking up the costs to every family, to every industry, and driving industry out. For the government members: Let's stand up and tell the people of Ontario that you've had enough and you're going to get rid of this agency once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I think I'll start with something from Storms of My Grandchildren, by James Hansen. James Hansen is a NASA scientist. He's head of the Goddard Institute and he's adjunct professor in the department of earth and environmental sciences at Columbia University. He's been an expert that most presidents, except for George Bush, consulted with—the last three or four presidents.

He talks about coal. I think coal is something around this argument that we're talking about today. What he says is that, looking at the environmental deaths caused

by air pollution, assigning 10% of those to coal, which he feels is very, very moderate, that there are 100,000 deaths per year from coal and we still get people talking about clean coal. That's not even looking at the impact it has on the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the greenhouse gases. We've got that as something to start with. Mercury, arsenic, sulphates and other air and water pollutants—coal kills for sure.

One of the things that is sort of opposite to the way that we're doing—and we have our plan prepared by the OPA and our government—Ontario's long-term energy plan. This is a good plan.

Let me tell you how they do that in the United States. He says, on page 186 of his book, to "Think Washington" for these sessions on energy. "Think lobbyists. Think revolving doors. There were 2,340" and this is to the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't think it's too much to expect that the member would speak to the motion, not giving us some gobbledygook about United States'—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you.

The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I just say that we're looking at the planning of our long-term energy plan, our planning in Ontario. I just want to compare it with the US: They had 2,340 registered energy lobbyists when he checked in 2009. One "lobbyist, former House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt"—$120,000 from coal company Peabody every three months. Everybody in Washington is sort of owned by the coal or the oil or the big car lobbies.

In here, we have a group of very competent civil servants working with the government, and have prepared a really good plan. It's a good plan. You talk about the energy mix. That's something we've been working on for three years. It's a good energy mix. You're all concerned about solar; well, it's 1.5% in 2030—1.5% solar. We're moving the clean, green energy forward. We're doing the research. The industry tells us that the costs will come down. We're doing our part as leaders in Ontario to do that. We've got wind energy shown in 2030 of 10%.

1550

But the nice thing about what we're doing in Ontario—and I'd just like to get to that. Some $1.6 billion has been spent on the Niagara tunnel hydroelectric project. Water power is green, and we're doing the best we can with what we've got. There's $2.6 billion for the Lower Mattagami River. We're doing that.

I'd just like to go through—because there's a lot of information that hasn't been correct around the tie-in with Quebec in my area and your area as well, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. That area has possible benefits from the tie-in. The Ontario government recognized the importance of accessing hydroelectric supply from Quebec and invested in a transmission interconnection that provides our province with access to 1,250 megawatts of clean hydro power at the interface, just east of my riding, in Jean-Marc Lalonde's riding, the riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. It's right at Cumberland; there's a tie-in with the Quebec system. It's a new tie-in. We spent $124 million, and the Quebec government spent $684 million, to provide that 1,250.

We're looking forward to getting the best deals for Ontario, and we've negotiated with Quebec. In June 2008, Ontario and Quebec signed a memorandum of understanding to promote energy co-operation between the two provinces. The 1,250-megawatt intertie fully came into service in June 2010. So it was just last year that we got that tie-in with Quebec.

We've had a lot of incorrect information from one radio station in particular in Ottawa, so I'd just like to clarify Ontario's ongoing discussions and contracting power purchases with Quebec, Manitoba and Newfoundland. To date, we have not been able to achieve a mutual agreement that meets Ontario's need for reliable, cost-effective supply. Quebec has many options when it comes to selling their power, including markets in the northeast United States. Quebec has a finite amount of electricity it can export, and most of it is already tied up with long-term power purchase contracts with Vermont and New York. Power purchases from Quebec would be at prices—not six cents, as we hear around Ottawa on some of the news places; it would be at a price that we would negotiate with the government of Quebec, and we'd be in there with Vermont and New York. And we're only going to be buying that during peak periods, so we're going to pay the market price. Nobody is going to give us six-cent power in Quebec.

The recently completed intertie enables power to flow freely between the provinces when it's cost-effective to do so. Ontario is able to purchase power from Quebec during peak periods in the summer, and Quebec is able to purchase power from Ontario during Quebec's peak winter season, when their heating demand is highest and their rivers are generating the least hydro. That's just a wonderful connection where we can get that 1,250 megawatts of electricity, and at a reasonable price.

These are the good people from OPA who have negotiated that over the years and put that in place, and that's the long-term planning that they're looking for. During the winter, Quebec is often in need of additional power, rather than being in a position of surplus. So we'll be selling to them; they'll be selling to us.

Our supply situation is much better today. At low-use periods, we don't need Quebec's power. Just a few years ago, in 2003, we were a net importer of power, paying $400 million that year. In 2010, Ontario was a net exporter of power, receiving a net benefit of $300 million. So we do have a good record of energy buying and energy selling, and certainly now that we have sufficient power in place, we are doing a great job.

But that's the engineers and other professions down at OPA that are looking to that. And I can see that the first thing to go—and that's probably where the opposition parties are coming from. Develop and deliver province-

wide conservation programs—that's what they're doing. Right now, we have, I believe, 1,700 megawatts of conservation, and for 2030 we're looking for 14% projected. That would be a great deal of conservatio that will be coming on over the next few years.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this, Speaker, but I have, I believe, clarified the situation re: our connection with Quebec in Cumberland.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This opposition motion comes down to one point: Your government and your province have a clear, workable plan to generate sustainable, affordable and abundant electrical power and the Conservative Party does not. Ontario has a plan, and it has been in process for more than six years. It takes planners to formulate and administer a plan and to keep it on budget and on schedule. The Conservatives have no plan, and they propose to fire the people who have a plan and know how to make it happen. That's what this motion is all about.

So what do you get when you have no plan and you say you're going to fire the people who are making Ontario's electricity plan work? You get the Conservative four-point electricity plan:

(1) Blame the government, because you don't want people to think; you want them to succumb to their darkest emotions.

(2) Do nothing. They did it before, and they'll do it again. They built nothing, and Ontario lost more electricity generation capacity than Niagara Falls provides during those years from 1995 to 2003.

(3) Burn dirty coal. They did it before, and they'll do it again. Goodbye, clean air; hello, smog days. Get your children a puffer for the asthma that has been in decline since 2003, because Ontario has been phasing out coal.

(4) Finally, buy US power on the US spot market. The very people who feign indignation at feed-in tariff rates would pay between $1.50 and $2—or more—per kilowatt hour for expensive spot market US power. That's more than double the highest feed-in tariff rate for solar photovoltaic electricity.

So what, in very practical terms, is the result of scrapping the Ontario Power Authority, which is completely in keeping with the Conservative four-point energy plan? It would force planning, procurement and conservation duties onto another agency that isn't set up to deal with them and would save the province no money—and probably cost it more. Or it would spread planning, procurement and conservation duties across multiple agencies, resulting in duplication, inefficiency and more, not less, bureaucracy. But that is also in keeping with the Conservative four-point energy plan.

Finally, it would kill conservation programs, requiring more and more expensive generation, and it would eliminate long-term planning, thus returning us to the chaos, the confusion and the expense of those last chaotic Conservative government years. If we've learned anything about the way the Conservatives manage electricity, it's that when they say it will be simple, it means it will be complex; if they say rates will decrease, it means that rates will increase; and if they say generation will increase, it means that generation will decrease.

The Ontario Power Authority is an arm's-length agency that ensures that the electricity system can't be used as a tool to reward insiders, as the Conservatives did before and, if given a chance, will do again. From losing 1,800 megawatts of generating capacity on their watch—roughly the equivalent of Niagara Falls for a year—with the help of the Ontario Power Authority, Ontario has added more than 8,400 megawatts of electrical generating capacity. That alone pays for the Ontario Power Authority's costs many times over.

The Conservatives spent nothing on upgrading Ontario's transmission grid when they were in government. This Ontario government has upgraded more than 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines.

Coal costs Ontario more than $3 billion a year, with an estimated 250 premature deaths, 340 hospital admissions, 400 emergency room visits, and 120,000 preventable illnesses each year, most of them in the very young and the very old. They did it before; they'll do it again.

By the end of their last sorry watch in government, this Conservative Party's Independent Electricity Systems Operator—that's the agency that oversees the moment-by-moment functioning of Ontario's electrical system—had to repeatedly plead with consumers not to use electricity when they desperately needed it, at the height of the summer and in the depths of the coldest weather.

If you want to go back to those days when the system teetered on the brink of collapse, this resolution is your starting point.

Besides driving up the use of dirty coal by more than 127%—that's more than double—and ignoring the mercury and the sulphur dioxide that went up the stack and out into the environment, Ontario during their watch went on life support from imported—and that's at any price—American electricity. That cost us an extra $1 billion in just two years, and we owned nothing—nothing.

They also generated electricity from privately leased generators whose price was $2.84 per kilowatt hour when the price of power in the province was 4.3 cents.

This resolution speaks so eloquently to the reason that, next October 7, this province of Ontario will again have a Liberal majority government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Pursuant to standing order 43(d), the time has expired, and I will now put the question without further debate.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1602 to 1612.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 3. All

those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Clark, Steve	Kormos, Peter	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	MacLeod, Lisa	Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Albanese, Laura	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza	
Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 21; the nays are 46.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm shaken after that vote that I thought for sure would have passed on that opposition day motion by my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. With that in mind, I will proceed.

This is an important bill, Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law. To put a bit of a frame around this, our leader, Tim Hudak, and of course the Conservative caucus are in support of this particular bill. Why? Because Christopher's Law was implemented in 2000, and I believe at that time—I'm not certain, but I believe with some confidence—David Tsubouchi was the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

It was long-sought-after by a couple of well-intentioned members of cabinet, at that time, who wanted to make Ontario's communities safer. There were various trials at that time of convicted sex offenders. I remember David Young, for one, who was very outspoken as a lawyer; the Attorney General was supportive; Jim Flaherty as well at the same time; and most members of caucus—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me, I would ask the member to stop for a second. Stop the clock. All those members who have no business in chamber, if they could take their private conversations outside. I'm having difficulty hearing the speaker. Thank you. Continue.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much for that respectful remark, Speaker. It seems that no one was listening. I'm not sure that's a good or a bad thing.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not true.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's not true.

As I said, it's just a bit of frame around it by repeating the past. I think it's important to read Christopher's Law. I have a copy of it here. In the preamble, it discloses to the people of Ontario the intent.

"The people of Ontario believe that there is a need to ensure the safety and security of all persons in Ontario and that police forces require access to information about the whereabouts of sex offenders in order to assist them in the important work of maintaining community safety. The people of Ontario further believe that a registry of sex offenders will provide the information and investigative tools that their police forces require in order to prevent and solve crimes of a sexual nature."

It goes on to define in regulation a lot of what this bill does. It does what it says, which is a nice change: It provides a registry.

The interesting part of how this gets a bit twisted over time is that the rules change. Whether it's provincially, federally or internationally, these registries change, and there are different rules for people required to report—if they're out of the country or other circumstances.

If you look at this bill, in the explanation clause—it's a very small bill. It's mostly housekeeping, but it does a couple of things which I think are worth repeating, since the parliamentary assistant, I think, was last to speak. It says that the bill aligns itself with recent changes made to the national sex offender registry via Bill S-2. These changes are as follows: (1) amends the requirements of offenders "to report within 15 days after or before various events ... so that the number of days will in the future be specified by regulation rather than" the act itself; (2) requires offenders who have been convicted of a sex offence outside of Canada and who have been ordered to report on the national registry to also report to the

Ontario registry; and (3) allows the Ontario registry to maintain the records of registered offenders who receive a pardon under the Criminal Records Act.

That is the information. As I said, the last amendment here was in 2008. The sex offender's law by David Tsubouchi, as I said, was in 2000, and the registry has a compliance rate of 97%, which is highly respected internationally. The Ontario registry is managed and maintained by the ministry's sex offender registry (SOR) unit within the OPP headquarters based in Orillia.

1620

I know that there's a lot of respect for the law enforcement officers having the right tools in the right place at the right time, and this is where there's a bit of a gap, if you will. I think this is an attempt to manage or maintain—there's a harmony between the federal act and the registry as well as the provincial. I would hope there are no holes here where things get missed.

If you look at the bill in some detail—and again, there will be other speakers who are lawyers, which I am not, who will draw your attention to the intricacies of legislation that is so important. I think we all kind of agree with it. Have we got it right, and what things should be discussed openly? I'd say here, in my case, I'm critic of the Ministry of Government Services. In that ministry, really, not a lot happens outside of spending a lot of money on contracts, which is probably—I understand it is about $1 million a day they spend on consultants and other things that should be questioned. In fact, FOI stuff often doesn't get answered in a timely manner, as you would know, Madam Speaker, in your critic role, in your other job here.

There's a name change act which comes under that ministry, and here's the small slice where I raise some consideration, if you will. I'm going to read the section, without it being totally kind of just blah blah blah for some people listening. For lawyers and others it might be important.

"Subsection 1(1) of the act is amended to define 'pardon' as a free pardon granted under Her Majesty's royal prerogative of mercy or under section 748 of the Criminal Code (Canada) or a pardon or record suspension under the Criminal Records Act (Canada). The new section 9.1"—which I'll read in a moment—"which replaces the former subsection 9(3), requires the minister to delete references to an offender from the sex offender registry if the offender receives a free pardon for every sex offence in respect of which the act applies to him or her, but not if the offender receives only a pardon or record suspension under the Criminal Records Act (Canada). However, an offender's reporting requirement ceases under subsection 7(4) of the act if the offender receives either a free pardon or a pardon or record suspension under the Criminal Records Act (Canada)."

Sounds a little complicated, and there'll be others who will clarify this for us in the debate. But really, what it's saying in substance is, a person can commit an offence. In this case we're talking about sexual offence. Some of them might be—I mean, they're all reprehensible, in my view, abhorrent in many cases and unacceptable in almost all cases. But things happen, whether it's at an office party or whatever. Often even people at the time may have been consenting individuals, but in time they may have had disagreements and then they would claim the person was violated and have charges laid. It could even happen in a marriage, technically, a marriage of same-sex partners or opposite; it doesn't matter. If the charge was laid, then the authorities would have the responsibility to follow up on it.

There's where it all gets a bit dicey. If a person commits an offence—let's say they rob a bank. I happened to see a program on television some months ago. The person had robbed the bank—in fact, they were a police officer—then admitted it, and had really been given a pardon because the rest of their life was about giving back to society by exposing their wrongful deed. They were given a pardon.

Now, how a pardon works is federal. So the federal government, under Her Majesty's orders, can give a pardon to someone who has committed an offence and been charged and served time and has obviously been rehabilitated somehow. There's the second key word: "rehabilitated."

I'm not in any way an authority at all, but I think it's always important to err on the side of protecting public safety. That's what the intent of this bill is. If there's a risk to the public—we saw that in the G8 and the G20. Perhaps they may have overreacted in that case; I don't know. I think there are three or four inquiries about it, because some people's rights were perhaps trampled and one or two individual police officers may have gone overboard or got excited.

But my point here is that section 9.1—I'll just read that because it's not that big and there's time here. I'm reading the bill, and as I said, it's only a couple of pages long; it's not that large. It's amending existing legislation. It's under the section called "Offender deleted from registry."

"9.1 If an offender"—"offender" means they're a convicted sex offender; let's put this in real, exact language—"receives a pardon of the type described in clause (a) or (b) of the definition of 'pardon' in subsection 1(1), for every sex offence for which this act is made applicable to him or her, the ministry shall delete every reference to and record of the offender from the sex offender registry."

I think of Clifford Olson and others—predators in society—and I think of those who are what I'd call addicted sex offenders, serial rapists and those kinds of things. It's completely unacceptable to any party of any stripe.

I've written a letter to the federal minister on this. I don't understand why anyone who has been convicted of a predatory type of offence—like the old hockey coach that was in the news here some months ago—would ever get a pardon. I've written to the federal minister to clarify this. I want an answer from the federal minister on this. Why would they ever get a pardon—period?

Now, it's not me. I have five children and soon will have seven grandchildren. I did a bit of research on this. What's the recidivism rate? It's quite interesting, because here's Christopher's Law, and this is an article—I'm not making this stuff up. These are research papers that my legislative intern—and they're wonderful; OLIP, the Ontario Legislature internship program, is the best program here. Charles Thompson, a Queen's grad, could easily be standing here perhaps doing as good a job, but no experience so far. He's just learning.

This article is from Scientific American: "Once a Sex Offender, Always a Sex Offender? Maybe Not." It raises the question that I'm raising, and the point here, in the few minutes, is to sort of educate myself and those who may be listening.

This is a recent research summary on child molester recidivism. It's an article issued by the Solicitor General of Canada. This article, issued in 1996, by the way, says—there are several answers—"The initial follow-up of the child molesters found that 42% were reconvicted of a sexual or violent crime during the 15-30-year follow-up period." That's just a very brief one.

"Sex Offender Recidivism," a July 2004 article by Karl Hanson, Ph.D., Corrections Research, Public Safety Canada—again, these are all citations that I can give you. Basically in summary he goes on to say: "Between years 15 and 20, post-release, an additional three percent (3%) had a new charge or conviction for a sexual offence. After" 25 "years, 73% of sexual offenders had not been charged with, or convicted...."

When you look at the broader, you have to look at the subcategories within the classification of "sex offender" who would be on the register. It could be somebody who had an argument with their partner, really. So these big paintbrushes often mischaracterize the actual event. I'm trying to establish here that not all—but that's up to the experts, whether they're judges, trial lawyers or whoever.

There's a forum on corrections research—and this is another citation. This is fairly recent. It's talking about sex offender recidivism as well. "After an average follow-up of 59 months, 27.5% of the sex offenders sexually recidivated and 40.4% of the sex offenders were arrested, convicted or returned to the psychiatric facility for a violent offence."

1630

Now, there's the word that's sliding in here. The person has a medical condition, I would say, potentially. It's potential. They're saying 40%. And in some cases, if they're tried and not convicted because of a medical condition—illnesses often categorized as mental illness—this comes into play as well. Again, this is "A Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Treatment for Sexual Offenders: Risk, Need, and Responsivity." This is by R. Karl Hanson, Guy Bourgon, Leslie Helmus and Shannon Hodgson for Public Safety Canada.

There's a lot of work that's been done on this. Why is there a lot of work? There's uncertainty. If there's uncertainty, err on the side of safety: no pardon. Now, they can appeal for a pardon—it's shown in these records that they are contributing to this study and pardon should be granted. I'm not the person granting this, nor would I ever want to be, especially if you pose a risk to society.

In this one here—I guess there are several pages. This is a little longer report, actually. It says, "Based on a meta-analysis of 23 recidivist outcome studies meeting basic criteria for study quality, the unweighted sexual and general recidivism rates for the treated sexual offenders were lower than the rates observed for the comparison groups." It goes on to cite technically that there is evidence that recidivism does occur, and oddly, to the readers, an age and sexual recidivism comparison of rapists and child molesters in 2001 to 2010.

This is Karl Hanson's work. He's done a lot of work on this issue and certainly would be a person you'd refer to if there were hearings. If there were hearings on this particular bill, I would encourage him to—even if he gets a piece of this Hansard, he might want to follow up.

But because we're on limited time, and I know the member from Welland, as a lawyer, will probably be speaking more accurately and more thoroughly on this bill—there are a couple of other parts that I did want to get on the record before I stop; to put on the record what I felt. In Ontario, we could have the right to refuse a name change on a pardon. That would be one solution. If someone had a pardon, they have no duty to inform the name change agency that they have a pardon. I think they should be required to inform, on a name change, the history. These are small, innocuous things; one in every 10 million, or even greater, possibilities.

Recidivism: A study from the University of Florida found that the average number of the general public believe that 75%—this is an observation—of sex offenders re-offend. That's actually wrong, and it should be corrected. The actual rate of sexual recidivism in Canada for all sex offenders is around 27% within 12 years after release. So it does exist; it's about one in four. That's about it.

The likelihood that a released sex offender will commit another violent offence of any type—assault or murder—in addition to rape or sexual assault is around 40%. So we are getting—these aren't things I'm making up. These are from the research here.

Non-sexual criminals, by contrast—these are people who have committed a bank robbery or whatever—have an 83.2% chance of re-offending, though it should be noted that this is probably for any kind of offence, from breaking and entering to murder. So that's a whole group. That's everybody else but the sex offenders. So it's a higher recidivism rate—and you wonder how well the corrections facility part works; early release or early parole. These kinds of things come into it. I'd like to see the early release and early parole and their recidivism numbers; how many don't re-offend, having served their time, and we just don't bother.

Here's the issue, though: The rate of re-offence differs substantially by category of offence. A certain subgroup of offenders reoffends at a higher rate. The highest rate of recidivism, maybe as high as 77%, is for those who have

previous sex offences who selected extrafamilial boy victims and were never married. Child molesters generally have a rate of reoffending as high as 35%.

I only bring this up because in the nature of this bill, which we all endorse, we need to be confident that the pardons portion gets addressed. Federally, "Why give them a pardon?" solves the problem.

It's also affecting the volunteer organizations. People who work with vulnerable individuals have to get a background check today, whether it's Cubs, hockey or working in an elderly home. That background check, if you happen to meet, on the name—and I have a constituent who has lost a job, a very qualified individual, because their name is the same as somebody on the sex offender registry. They lost the job.

We've got to sort this mess out so that when there are hits, there's more than the criteria of where they were born and more than just the name that they were matched on. There's a lot of John Smiths around, and technically, that could possibly affect a person's future career as well. So there are some things here to add to this discussion, and I hope that the ministry and their staff are listening and they fix it before it actually becomes law.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this Bill 163.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have listened carefully to the member as he addresses this bill on behalf of his Conservative caucus. I'll be speaking to the bill for my one-hour lead in approximately eight minutes' time.

New Democrats are supporting this legislation. We don't intend to belabour the point at length here in the chamber. It's important that this bill get into committee, and we look forward to doing that committee work.

There are some questions that should be put during the course of the debate and, of course, more conveniently and appropriately, once we're in committee. They go to the effectiveness of this registry as a means of protecting—obviously, in the case of many children or other potential victims of sexual predators—but also, the effectiveness of the legislation in terms of avoiding the recidivism that the member for Durham just spoke of in his address to the chamber.

The behaviours that we're talking about here are probably some of the most resistant behaviours that you can find towards treatment or towards therapy. Even dramatic treatments like chemical castration have oftentimes been unsuccessful at deterring a child molester. Again, let's understand that we're not just talking about people who victimize children; we're talking about people who are sexual criminals across the spectrum. Obviously, it's children who warrant the most protection, and the reason why is because they're ill-inclined to protect themselves and because children inherently trust adults—and they should be able to trust adults. As a matter of fact, that should be perceived and addressed as something of a very fundamental right, which is why we have such repugnance for people who perpetrate the sort of crimes that are contemplated by the legislation and people who are therefore called upon to submit themselves to inclusion on a registry.

In around eight minutes' time I'll have the floor and will be speaking at greater length to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I really appreciate the contribution made by the member from Durham today on Bill 163. What I found very interesting—and I certainly commend him for the research that his team provided. He spoke, in drilling down, on some general statistics that are often used in the media, talking about some of the most heinous crimes that have ever been committed here in Ontario, or indeed, throughout Canada. You need, as he articulated this afternoon, to take the time to drill down through those subcategories and really get the true picture of what we're talking about in terms of these sexual predators that are out there and the number of repeat offenders, particularly in very specific categories.

Hopefully, these amendments on Bill 163 will go to committee and it will be the opportunity for individuals who have a great depth of knowledge in this particular area to come forward and, certainly, to comment on some of the points that have been made quite effectively by the member for Durham on this particular bill. There's no question.

Christopher's Law, the foundation, was put together back in 2002, and I think it's fair to say that members on all sides want to see these amendments put into place as quickly as possible to make sure that the amendments indeed will instil the confidence that we expect when we establish this registry and that people who need to use it are getting very accurate information to provide some confidence and safety in today's society. It's interesting; on Thursday, the member from Oshawa will have a private member's bill dealing with background checks for people involved in minor league sports.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Madam Speaker, I appreciate you recognizing me. I want to compliment the member for Durham for his presentation this afternoon on Bill 163, the amendments to the sex offender registry legislation, which is, of course, known Christopher's Law. The member pointed out that Christopher's Law was originally passed through this Legislature I believe in the year 2000, during the years of the Progressive Conservative government, between 1995 and 2003. This is one of the signature pieces of legislation that was in the public interest at the time. Certainly, we are very proud of having brought it forward and we're pleased that the government of the day is building upon it with these amendments to ensure that our sex offender registry in the province of Ontario conforms to the recent renewal to the federal sex offender registry.

The member for Durham made a number of very pertinent and insightful comments, but the one thing that

he said that I couldn't agree more with is, of course, that we should always err on the side of public safety. If we're thinking about what we can do to protect children in the province of Ontario, obviously, there's nothing more important than that, quite frankly. That should be our motivation.

We're aware that the federal government maintains a sex offender registry as well, but the provincial government registry enhances the ability of all police services to access information. That is a very important feature of what we're talking about today.

Our caucus is going to be supporting this legislation. I would hope that this debate will continue quickly so that we can get the bill to committee and make the further refinements that are going to be necessary to get the bill passed to ensure that our system, our sex offender registry, is as up to date as possible, meeting the needs of the police services of Ontario in the year 2011 that we're in and ensuring that everything that can be done is being done to protect our children.

Again, I want to compliment the member for Durham and thank him very much. I look forward to the contributions of other members in this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: Do I get the extra two minutes or no? Whatever.

I thank the members from Welland, Peterborough and Wellington–Halton Hills. I guess there were a couple of more comments. There have been quite a few hours or time spent on this bill that we all agree on. We all agree that it's going to go to committee, I would hope.

I just reflect on one more thing, to clarify: The member from Toronto Centre has mentioned a couple of times that the vast majority of offenders who are involved in familiar relationships with children and vulnerable people would be—family members are the biggest perpetrators. It's sad to say that, but it happens, and we've seen inquests about it. Violence and sexual abuse and the rest of it—it's not a pleasant topic. That's why we need to make sure we protect the most vulnerable members of society, that is, the very young and the very old. This bill is just one part of that. I have a private member's bill that looks at the power of attorney and the Substitute Decisions Act, which isn't that glamorous, but elderly and frail elderly are often being abused by having the improper paperwork in place to make sure that they are properly protected by—and including loved ones. I have cases there.

We're going to have, I gather, some time in committee. The experts should be called on to those committees. Often those things are more or less housekeeping amendments and drafting errors and stuff that they deal with, but there's an opportunity here to strengthen the bill. I think that's important.

I would say that every member here has a story, or even in their riding work, where they know of families that have been destroyed by these incidents. I always think, most importantly, of the victims. Those people who are using their positions of strength and power to abuse someone else's life—it's completely unacceptable, most specifically when it addresses children. All of us feel, I'm sure, the same way. I hope this bill does improve those things for vulnerable people in society.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. Let's spend a few moments putting this bill in the historical context. Christopher Stephenson was an 11-year-old boy back in 1988 when he was butchered, murdered, slaughtered, by a sex offender who, in fact, was on parole from the sentence that he was serving when he committed this offence. The coroner's inquest in 1992 recommended, amongst other things, that there be a sex offender registry. I recall well the debate in this Legislature in 2000, when the government of the day brought forward Christopher's Law. I recall the debate in the chamber as well as the process in committee, and it's trite to say that all three parties, every member of this Legislative Assembly, supported Christopher's Law when it was enacted in 2000.

Here we are, six months before a provincial election, in the midst of a federal election, a federal election in which the crime card, or at least the fear-of-crime card, is being played, and I suspect will be played more heavily as the federal election advances, with a bill that everybody supports, that everybody simply wants to see become more effective. There will be no shortage—it will be like old dogs marking their turf—of caucus members from the government caucus or the opposition caucus or the NDP caucus trying to out-law-and-order the other because somehow there's this passion for being more true to the law-and-order agenda than the other guy.

That has happened before in this Legislative Assembly. I think one of the things that it compels one to speak to is the fact that there isn't a single member of this assembly—I dare say, has never been a member of this assembly—who, in any way, shape or form, advocates criminal activity or supports criminal activity or isn't on the side of victims of crime, especially kids who are victims of crime or women who are victims of crime. In that respect, trying to outdo one another is really not fair to the issue, is it? It's certainly not fair to Christopher Stephenson and his memory.

His father has to be commended. His father was here in chamber when the government introduced this bill on the occasion of its first reading, and certainly was here listening to Minister Bradley speak to it when he led off second reading debate on, I believe, March 23, last week. I was here as well. One has to admire the pluck of Mr. Stephenson, his doggedness, his tenacity, his courage for continuing to hound governments, federal and provincial, so that they can develop a system of sex offender registries.

He does this, I'm sure, in memory of his son, but he also does it because he knows the incredible pain of

losing a child that way. Losing any child is pain, and the very essence of losing a child is an injustice, but to have your daughter or son brutally murdered by somebody who's on parole, by somebody who's literally still serving a sentence—because when you're on parole, you're still serving that sentence.

One of the problems is that most sentences for most sex offences are sentences for which, at some point, unless the convicted party is deemed a dangerous offender or any of those classifications or categories for which he can be detained indefinitely, the person is released from custody. While one can refer to literature, and the literature is abundant, about the difficulty of treating these sorts of extremely dangerous behaviours—the likelihood of treatment is slim, marginal—surely, one of the things that we have to focus on, one of the things we have to think about, one of the things we have to commit ourselves to, knowing that the vast majority of sex offenders are going to be released at some point because their sentence will be completed, surely we've got to address the need for there to be as intense a treatment regimen as possible when that person is serving a custodial sentence.

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Part of me believes—and I've believed this for a long, long time—there should only be two types of sentences: either very, very short ones or very, very, very long ones. The acting parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General—because, of course, he's the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, but he's very ably assisting the Solicitor General in this instance. The acting parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, full-time parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, may well have hard data for us by the time we get to committee, and I think one of the things that we really want to look at is the extent to which this registry has been effective.

You will recall that in 2007, the Auditor General devoted a significant amount of his report to the Ontario sex offender registry. Questions were put by the Auditor General that remain to be answered by the government. One of the interesting comments made by the Solicitor General when he was speaking to this bill on second reading—I'm sorry; it wasn't on March 23, it was March 22—was his, the Solicitor General's, reference to a Washington State Institute for Public Policy report. This is what the Solicitor General, the Minister of Community Safety, said: "According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, offenders convicted for failing to register are 50% more likely to reoffend." No kidding. The mere fact that a person wouldn't register sends a pretty strong signal that that person has ill intentions or evil intentions, that that person has consciously avoided registering so that he or she can't be identified or located as a registered sex offender, and one of the strong motivations for that person to do that is because she or he wants to keep on committing offences, or has little confidence in their ability to not reoffend.

In many respects, that point becomes troubling, because although there is a high level of compliance, and in fact the Solicitor General told us that we have one of the highest compliance rates of all sex offender registries, it is the 1% or 2% or 3% who don't register who, it appears, are the most dangerous, because they're the most likely to reoffend. So what does that tell us about the sex offender registry? Because the mere fact that the person hasn't registered means that you're not going to be able to locate him or her by scanning that registry.

I suppose the question that ought to be put to the ministry when this goes to committee is, what is being done, either at the federal level or at the provincial level, to ensure that data acquired during the course of a trial is being deposited with the sex offender registry, so that the state isn't merely relying upon voluntary compliance by the offender when she or he is released from custody? Because it's the small, small, small percentage of people who don't register that are the high, high, high risk people. We learned back in 2000, when we dealt with Christopher's Law in the first instance, that the first literal minutes after a kid disappears are the most critical, and certainly the first 24 hours—that a child, if not found during that critical period of time, is increasingly likely to be found as a corpse rather than alive. That's why there's some real pressure on police when it comes to locating children who have been abducted by deviants.

One of the concerns that the Auditor General had back in 2007 was that, at that point in time, a scan of the Ontario registry didn't allow people doing the search to break it down into components that would help them refine their search. In other words, if they were looking for a male offender who showed a preference for a particular-aged youth and youth of a particular sex, the search couldn't be refined to hone in on those people who fit that profile. The Auditor General recommended that be one of the changes that be made—logically—to the sex offender registry. I'm going to get to more, but I have no concerns whatsoever about the existence of the registry even if it only exists as a scarlet letter. The mere fact of having to register after a conviction or a finding of guilt, if it does nothing more than draw attention to the fact that there is a strong societal denunciation of the behaviour that's committed by that offender, that's fine by me. I have no qualms about that whatsoever.

Indeed, the sex offender registry in Ontario and Canada is accessible only by police services, police forces. There are sex offender registries that are accessible by the general public—in the United States, for instance. Some would say, and it's pretty difficult not to agree, that this could give rise to vigilantism. It could put innocent people at risk if an innocent person's name is found on a sex offender registry, not because they are there, but because somebody with an identical name is there.

But having said that, and I know we had this discussion first round in 2000, why wouldn't there be public access to a sex offender registry? Why aren't you as a parent entitled to know that your neighbour molests kids? Why aren't you? How else do you protect your kid, if you aren't identifying people who are going to prey on him or her? Of course, the contra arguments, counter-

vailing arguments, are the risks of vigilantism and the risks to innocent people who are misidentified.

Yet, having said that, all of this information is, in itself, public. People are entitled to access to a courtroom. People can identify who's being tried and who's being convicted. People can read this in the newspapers.

There would appear to be multiple levels or classifications of sex offenders. There are those who maybe travel out of the jurisdiction where their trial and conviction took place so that they can exploit the anonymity of being a stranger in a strange town. Then there will be those for whom there's no escape, even though it's remarkable how casually even some of our most notorious sex offenders manage to function.

I do want to mention great praise for my federal counterpart, Malcolm Allen, who is the federal member for the riding of Welland. He was the member of Parliament who was responsible for negotiating with the federal minister, Minister Toews, around the legislation, the Criminal Records Act pardon legislation, that made it impossible for one Karla Homolka to get a pardon under the Criminal Records Act legislation almost as a matter of course because five years had elapsed between the completion of her sentence and the time of her application for a pardon under the Criminal Records Act. Malcolm Allen did everyone a great service by raising this with Toews and ensuring that, in fact, legislation proceeded quickly through the federal Parliament. Otherwise we would have seen the bizarre, the unconscionable, the unforgivable scenario of that woman literally not having a criminal record for the purposes of the Criminal Records Act.

1700

We already discovered how other notorious sex offenders were not just slipping through the cracks but were walking through them when it came to Criminal Records Act pardons, and them no longer then bearing the stigma of a criminal record or a record of finding of guilt.

I do want to ask the parliamentary assistant, because I understand the section 748 pardons and the free pardon referred to in section 1, and I do understand that should a free pardon be granted, that person then, if she or he were on the registry—their name would be removed from the registry. A free pardon, as I understand it—and I'm going to need some help from the parliamentary assistant, if he can—would occur in an instance where an innocent person was convicted: the Milgaard situation or any other number of notorious situations where people have been tragically wrongfully convicted. Rubin "Hurricane" Carter's conviction, notorious from the States—he's now a resident of Toronto and has taken up the cause of the wrongfully convicted for the last part of his life.

But then I'm confused a little bit by the explanatory note that makes reference to a Criminal Records Act pardon where you're in no way, shape or form deemed not to have committed the offence. Nobody's saying you're innocent, but again these are the pardons—kids who get caught—who knows?—importing hash from Nepal or the sort of youthful escapades that kids get themselves involved in and they mature out of it. Maybe they were influenced by friends who exhorted them to bring them some hash from Nepal, but five years after the fact when that person's now in his or her 20s, it's not inappropriate at all for a Criminal Records Act pardon to be granted.

Let me tell you—and I've gotten these frantic phone calls from border communities. It's a heck of a surprise when you're 40 years old and you are travelling with your spouse into Windsor and Detroit, or over into Buffalo or Niagara Falls, and you've got the kiddies in the back seat because you're on your spring break drive down to Florida, when some old marijuana conviction from when you were 19 pops up and you're denied entry to the States—very, very embarrassing. As I say, I've received those frantic phone calls on many occasions. Of course, the delays—it's a good nine-to-12-month turnaround time in getting a Criminal Records Act pardon. I know that constituency offices are prevailed upon to assist in that regard, and most of them do at the very least provide the kits for people to submit their applications. I don't urge—as a matter of fact, to the contrary, I urge people not to use these private services that purport to get you a pardon. You don't need them. They're just taking your money, and oftentimes they have the official-looking logos and seals on their advertising, somehow giving the impression that they're authorized by the RCMP or the federal government.

I'm concerned because the explanatory note talks about a reporting requirement ceasing "if the offender receives either a free pardon"—that's fine, I understand that; a free pardon is when you're innocent—"or a pardon or record suspension under the Criminal Records Act (Canada)," which is the criminal record pardon where you're not deemed to be innocent; the record is simply erased. As a matter of fact, it's erased subject to conditions. If you're reconvicted, that record can be revived, although I think a whole lot of experience is that that rarely happens. I'm not sure I've ever seen a case where a record has been revived as a result of a subsequent conviction. I don't even know what the process would be. I don't know how a crown attorney or the court manages or handles that sort of thing.

We should have some clarification around that, because one accepts that if a person gets a pardon—not guilty—that person should not be on the sex offender registry. However, if a person gets a Criminal Records Act pardon, where the criminal record is deleted not because they're innocent of anything, but because the passage of time and the Criminal Records Act pardoning process was applied, then most people would question whether that should immediately, in and of itself, give rise to the cessation of a reporting requirement.

Again, let's understand that at the very least, the existence of a sex offender registry has the scarlet letter principle behind it. It's a way of further denouncing the behaviour of the offender, of making it clear that we don't tolerate that sort of stuff.

Secondly—and I'm going to get to this before we're over—is the extent to which the sex offender registry is a tool that can be used by police. Presumably, the tool that it would be most frequently utilized for would be to locate somebody who is a sex offender, who is the suspect in the disappearance of a child. That's where time is of the urgency. You've got a whole pile of other sex offences, and we shouldn't somehow create the improper impression here that this sex offender registry is only for child molesters and people who prey upon children.

As a matter of fact, I'm sure there's some concern—at least there has been historically. The first sex offender registry in North America was in California—I think it goes back to the 1940s or 1950s—and it was used as a tool for persecuting gay and lesbian men and women, because most of what they did, whether it was at a dance or holding hands in public—stuff that now is quite normal—was actually prosecuted. So people who got themselves placed on the California sex offender registry merely for being gay or lesbian rightly felt that they were being unfairly not just prosecuted, but persecuted, and indeed that was the effect of it.

That's not the case—let's understand that and make that very clear—with this sex offender registry. First of all, those offences don't exist anymore. The Prime Minister in—what was it?—1970 changed the Criminal Code. Again, it's not the most trivial of offences that are going to find themselves on the registry.

One, there's the stigmatization. Some people may say, "Oh no, that's not the point, that's not the purpose, that's not the goal." I say, "Let's be clear about this and let's be candid about it." It's very much a goal. The fact that, once you're released from custody, you have to go down to your local police station and surrender yourself and provide identification and tell the police there that you've just been released from custody—or just out of the courtroom—for a sex offence and you're there to submit to the sex offence registry—that, I think, sends a large and strong and clear message to that offender, and it certainly sends the message that yes, sex offenders will be treated differently in the criminal justice system than other types of offenders.

Then there's the whole issue of access to the registry so that police can use the registry as a tool. That's where the recommendations of the Auditor General beg questioning.

In 2007, when the Auditor General considered the sex offender registry, the Auditor General told us that there were 7,400 offender records in the registry. He went on to say, "Its usefulness"—that is to say, the registry's usefulness—"could be greatly enhanced by providing additional search tools and improving the functionality of existing ones. For example:

"Some offenders have previously assaulted only females, others only males. Likewise, some offenders have assaulted only children, others only adults …

"Similarly, in a case involving an assault by a stranger, investigators should be able to screen out immediately those offenders who have assaulted only members of their immediate families or other relatives."

That's what the member from Durham was talking about. That's probably one of the most frequent scenarios wherein children are assaulted, and that's when they're assaulted by family members, by parents.

1710

The Auditor General goes on to say, "When investigating an assault at a particular location, in addition to generating lists of offenders who live closest to that location, investigators would find it useful to create a list of offenders whose past offences have occurred close to that location." This is what I indicated earlier, when we were starting these comments, is what is needed. It's going to be very important to find out if in fact these filtering tools have been added to the registry, because the Auditor General says, "Some of this information is already in the registry, but not in a searchable format.

"In the longer term, it could be useful to add several new fields, including victim characteristics such as hair colour or skin tone. The more detailed and searchable the data, the more effective the registry will be for investigators."

The Auditor General concludes, "A primary purpose of the registry is to assist police when they investigate a possible sexual offence, such as the abduction of a child. Research data indicate that in cases where a child is abducted for sexual purposes and then murdered, rapid response is critical because 44% of victims are killed within an hour of being abducted...." I just can't imagine the pressure the cops are under when a child disappears, and they know this data: 44% of kids who are abducted for sexual purposes are dead within an hour. Man, that's shocking. Even sadder is that 91% are dead within 24 hours—91%. Again, that puts pressure on cops; it puts a whole lot of pressure on them.

What it means is that if the sex offender registry is going to be useful to those cops, we want them to have all the tools available to them to save these kids' lives, because that's what they're talking about: They're talking about saving a kid's life. Some 44% dead within the first hour; 91% dead within the first 24 hours. That means that this toolbox had better be well-stocked and it had better be accurate. That's where I hearken back to one of the points we made at the get-go, and that is, what steps are being taken to ensure that we have 100% compliance? I don't know, and I want to find out—and the parliamentary assistant is going to help us, I'm sure—whether the data flowing from the courtroom at the time of a conviction is transmitted to the sex offender registry, so that the sex offender registry knows that somebody hasn't shown up to register, and then you can start tracking that person down. Is there communication between the Ministry of Correctional Services, our provincial reformatories and jails and the sex offender registry, so that when somebody is released from custody, having served their sentence as a sex offender, the ministry is advising the sex offender registry so that the sex offender registry starts ringing alarm bells if that person doesn't show up upon their release from a provincial institution?

Then what about the federal institutions? We know that one of the problems that was hearkened to by the Auditor General was the lack of communication between the federal institutions and the provincial registry. What is being done to ensure that everybody who's released from a federal institution is identified in a sex offender registry database so that if they don't show up to register, alarm bells start ringing?

I appreciate that's problematic when you're talking about a registry at a national scale, because a person can be released from a federal prison like Warkworth or Millhaven, and then—is Warkworth a federal institution? Warkworth or Millhaven?

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I should know; I've been there many times. Jeez, if having the lights go out was traumatic for the member from Ottawa Centre, I can tell him stories that are far more traumatic than the electricity going off, let me tell you.

But if the question is going to be put to the parliamentary assistant in committee about what process, what communication is taking place between these institutions and the various registries, how do we track that? We're told that there is not 100% compliance but we're told that there's the highest compliance in North America. Doesn't the fact that there's even a 1% or a 2% failure in terms of compliance, doesn't that put people at risk? We know that that person is the person most likely to reoffend. Those are the people who you want to be able to finger as quickly as possible if they're not on the registry. What are the chances for a kid who gets abducted by that person? Forty-four per cent dead within the first hour; 91% dead within the first 24 hours—in horrible, horrible deaths.

Again, it's hard not to return to this focus on young people as the people who are to be protected by the registry. It isn't just young people, but as they say, children are taught to respect their elders. That's why people prey on children. Children are taught to respect their elders, especially in a family situation. Most parents, now, street-proof their kid. They tell their kid, "Don't let people pick you up in a car. Don't talk to strangers," all that sort of stuff. What about when the predator is a family member, or your own parent? That's why I said we should have, part of my mind says, basically, two sentences in this country: Very, very short ones—because for most people, that's all you need; hearing that prison door clang shut behind you and you say, "That's it. I'll never be here again."—or very, very long ones, because it's not a matter anymore about mere deterrence. It's a matter of protecting society.

I've got a feeling—because this is one of the things we should be asking the parliamentary assistant. I've got a feeling that—and we don't want to encourage an abuse of the sections of the Criminal Code like the dangerous offender sections, which permit the person being detained indefinitely. We don't want to see them overused, but for Pete's sakes: It's one of the tools now that crown attorneys have, yet we've spoken in this chamber about instances where crown attorneys have neglected to make those applications. Sure, it's easy enough for us here to say, "What were you possibly thinking that you wouldn't have made that application?" Let the judge decide. Put the evidence in front of him or her and let that judge decide.

Our suspicions are that crown attorneys are burdened with excess numbers of files; that they have to prioritize their own files and cases and determine which ones warrant the extra consideration that those types of applications are going to require from the crown and the police and the courts. I will be expecting the parliamentary assistant to be able to tell the committee about the number of these applications being made here in the province of Ontario, about their success rate—because I suppose if we learn that there's only a 50% success rate, and I have no idea whatsoever what the number is, then the provisions are being overutilized. But if there's a high, high success rate in terms of getting the order that's being sought, it would suggest that the crown attorney was picking the right cases and maybe even suggests that not as many as ought to be submitted to this scrutiny are being put before our court.

Our provincial institutions have been stripped of most of their rehabilitative component. Rehabilitation covers a wide range of things, a huge gamut. There was a time when the OCI, the Ontario Correctional Institute at Brampton, was the place where pedophiles and arsonists, amongst others, went for imprisonment, but also with some pretty healthy—I hope it's not a poor choice of words—treatment therapy programs. Again, pedophilia is a horribly difficult thing to treat. Even when the accused have submitted to, as I said earlier, chemical castration, it's oftentimes not successful because it's not so much about the gonads, it's about, as it is with most sexual offences, rape amongst others, abuse and power and empowering oneself at the expense of somebody else. But if we don't have those programs working in our institutions, then our success rate is going to be absolutely zero. And if these people are going back out into the community, all the registries in the world won't prevent them from reoffending, will they? They'll help the police catch that person sooner rather than later, hopefully, and hopefully within the first hour—if not the first hour, within the first 24—but it doesn't eliminate the offence. So we've got to invest in adequate programs in our institutions: this Parliament, with its responsibility for provincial institutions, and the federal government, with its responsibility for jails.

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And oh, gosh, I know the spin that's coming out of Prime Minister Harper now about the need for more and bigger jails. Imprisonment is not the panacea that that camp would have us believe. The United States jails more people per capita than any other country in the world—the United States of America. Our neighbours to the south jail more people than any other country in the world, including the old Soviet Union, including despotic, totalitarian states, and one would be hard pressed

to argue that jailing people at that rate has done anything to make Americans safer in their homes or in their communities, or to make children safer in their playgrounds, or to in any way curb criminal behaviour. Because if you just warehouse people, if you don't do anything with them while they are serving their sentences, all you've got once that sentence is served is a craftier criminal, an angrier criminal, a more twisted, bent criminal, and a person whose lack of rehabilitation makes them all that much more likely to reoffend, because they have no good reason for not reoffending.

Here's where I raise this question. It's not a question that I designed; it's one that has been put across the continent.

I want to read from the report of the Auditor General. He writes, in 2007, "While the Ontario registry was the first in Canada ... sex offender registries are not new. They exist throughout the world, with the first North American registry having been established by the state of California in 1944. Three more states implemented programs in the 1960s and another seven in the 1980s. Most US jurisdictions now have sex offender registration laws, and registries generally receive considerable public support." Of course.

"Even though sex offender registries have existed for many years and can consume significant public resources, we found surprisingly little evidence that demonstrates their effectiveness in actually reducing sexual crimes or helping investigators solve them, and few attempts to demonstrate such effectiveness. This has not gone unnoticed by critics of sex offender registries, some of whom argue that public funds would be better spent on offender treatment and support programs where there has been some documented proof of effectiveness in reducing recidivism (that is, the committing of another crime by an offender after being released)."

It goes on to indicate—the John Howard Society; it was one of those groups, at least in 2001, that advocated that. I'm not one of those people. I'm not suggesting that the sex offender registry be abandoned, by any stretch of the imagination, and I don't think you'll hear a single member of this chamber say that. But I do think it's important for us to understand exactly the extent to which they are effective at preventing crime or helping the police to identify criminals.

We're told by the Auditor General that the annual cost of the sex offender registry, at least in 2006-07 or thereabouts, was around $4 million a year. That's an awful lot of money. But, hey, if you're talking about kids as victims, kids who are going to die if their predator has them for longer than an hour, it's chump change.

Surely we need to have a scientific understanding of how effective the registry is, if only for the purpose of understanding what we can do to change or alter or tinker with or readjust or fine-tune the registry to give it that higher level of effectiveness that we might wish for.

Let's put some of this in context with statistics. Statistics are, well, statistics, and to tell a victim of crime that crime is down this year is little comfort to the victim of that crime; it matters not. But these are the observations made: "Since 1993, the Canadian per capita report of sexual offences has decreased by 35%, and Ontario's rate is lower than the national average."

Now, I find that a peculiar statistic, because without explaining how it happened, the mere assertion that there's been a 35% reduction in sexual offences since 1993 doesn't tell us anything at all. I have no idea what that means. I have no idea if that information, that data, has any value whatsoever. That's a pretty bare and barren factoid.

Another observation made, and this again is the John Howard Society: "The more serious categories of sexual offences involving weapons, threats or serious injury constitute a relatively small proportion (3%) of all sexual offences, and these have also been declining in the last decade. (Statistics Canada data from 2005 indicate that this rate is now 2%.)"

Again, I have no idea what that means standing alone, and it's of little comfort to somebody who has been sexually assaulted at knife- or gunpoint.

Now, here's some data that perhaps is a little more useful: "In 77% of sexual crimes, the victim and the offender know each other. This rate rises to 84% for incidents involving children or youths. More than two-thirds of sexual assaults occur in homes, and many involve family members."

If anything, that data might be weaker than one wished, because a sex offence taking place in a home with a family member is, in my submission to you, far less likely to be reported to the authorities and investigated than a sex offence performed or committed by a stranger. So I think we should be leery of underreporting in the instance of intra-family sex assaults.

"A review of 61 studies from 1943 to 1995 dealing with sex offender recidivism found the overall re-offend rate was 13% over a five-year follow-up period, and one California follow-up study on offenders from 1973 through 1988 found that 20% of offenders had been rearrested for a sexual offence over the 15 years of the study. Thus, the majority of offenders do not commit a second sexual crime."

Again, there's the data. I can't refute it, but one of the things we know is this: Most sex offenders don't get arrested and prosecuted the first time they offend in a sexual assault against another party, especially ones who prey on children. By the time a sex offender has been arrested and convicted for sexually assaulting children, that person has probably sexually assaulted a number of children.

Again, children are not believed. That's maybe changing somewhat as our attitude toward this changes, but children aren't believed. Children are fearful of authority. Children can be intimidated. Children could be coerced into remaining silent. I know, as a criminal lawyer acting for a big chunk of young people—this is purely anecdotal—with kids who were getting themselves into trouble with the law one way or another, the number of incidents where those kids have been victimized in their own homes by their own family members was disturbing.

I want to wrap up on this portion of the Auditor General's comments—I think they're important to put into Hansard: "More recently, a 2004 research paper issued by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada based on a review and analysis of 95 different recidivism studies between 1943 and 2003 found that the sex offenders most likely to re-offend had deviant sexual interests and anti-social orientations."

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It goes on, "We recognize that Ontario's registry is still relatively new and, accordingly, the ministry has yet to establish performance measures for it. However, we believe it would be useful to start collecting data on the degree to which the registry has proven useful in helping the police solve sexual crimes or reduce the risk of such crimes."

This is 2007. It's almost four years ago that that report was published. Surely by now the ministry, the Solicitor General's ministry, can update us on the requests made by the Auditor General about the effectiveness of the sex offender registry.

There's a real danger. You're involved with the concept of SLAPP legislation: in other words, legislation that would eliminate the disincentive for people to litigate in public interest areas. There is a little bit of a chill that attaches to criticizing the sex offender registry in principle or in practice, because if one dares to criticize it, somehow the suggestion is that you don't believe sex offenders should be apprehended or that they shouldn't be prosecuted or that they shouldn't be convicted if they're guilty. I again go back to the reference at the beginning of this short hour that I've had, where this type of debate around this type of legislation has got people from all three caucuses lined up here, again, like old dogs in the snow marking turf, each one trying to out-law-and-order the other. And by God, somehow if you're not in tune 100%, you somehow must have something horribly, horribly wrong with you.

I'm saying that New Democrats support the principle of a sex offender registry, but we also have serious questions to ask about how well it's working—if it's working at all. Again, that data shouldn't be hard to compile. Only police officers can access the registry, so presumably you don't access it without documenting your search. We have to know what's being sought for—what's being sought, not sought for; that's bad grammar; what's being sought—who's doing the seeking and whether they're getting any results that are valuable.

I for one have not read a single newspaper report that has told us—and again, the parliamentary assistant may know better: "As a result of utilizing the sex offender registry, the police were able to do (a), (b), (c) or (d)." Again, that's not scientific stuff; that's anecdotal, but I'd like to be aware of some of the illustrations or some of the examples where the sex offender registry has been a useful tool for the police.

With anything like this, we can be lulled into a false sense of security. Because if a person is on the sex offender registry, we know that they are a sexual offender, but if they're not on it, it doesn't really tell us anything. It's one of the problems with criminal record searches for volunteers, for Big Brothers, Big Sisters, people who work in positions of trust. The fact that a person has a criminal record is fine and good; that tells us something. But if they don't have a criminal record, that doesn't tell us anything. That doesn't mean that they're an honest person. It means they haven't gotten caught or they haven't been successfully prosecuted, or maybe they're just in politics.

If a person is on the sex offender registry, we know that they've engaged in criminal activity of a sexual nature, and it can range on the continuum from—and I'm not going to get into some of the language that has gotten judges in serious, serious trouble—the sexual assaults for which lower penalties are imposed to sexual assaults which draw the maximum penalties, and you know what I'm talking about when I say judges have gotten into trouble because, of course, every one of them is serious.

So how does the sex offender registry distinguish one from the other? Or, I presume, it doesn't distinguish at all, and then that means that we have a larger pool to pick from rather than a smaller pool. But it also means that the police have to screen more people in a relatively short period of time. One of the most important observations was that made by the Auditor General when he talked about how people doing these searches have to be able to input these various filters so they can narrow it down to a certain group of people based on what type of victim they prefer, what areas of the world they commit their crimes in and so on.

Now, as for the parliamentary assistant, the acting parliamentary assistant—he's the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, and he's the acting parliamentary assistant in the instance of this bill. The minister really spoke optimistically about the likelihood of co-operation between the opposition critics and the parliamentary assistant. I don't want to put words into his mouth, but he painted a rather rosy picture. He said, "Mr. Zimmer will be involved very much in the carriage of this bill. Mr. Zimmer has worked with opposition critics exceedingly well as a member of the legal profession and as a person who—again, as with all of us, the member for Willowdale has an interest in matters that relate to legal situations which confront this House. I know that he has worked well with his colleagues on the other side of the House in dealing with various pieces of legislation."

There was nothing unparliamentary about that at all. Indeed, Mr. Zimmer, who appears to be the parliamentary assistant for everything when his skills are needed, has a good working relationship with his counterpart critics here in the chamber. I've had occasion over the last few weeks to chide the parliamentary assistant in the context of the polls being what they are and what a delight it will be to have him as a counterpart critic in the opposition. That's assuming, of course, that I get re-elected down in Welland or that I get the nomination. I haven't got the nomination yet.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You're at risk.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I don't know. You never can tell. But I wish that, for just one time—or maybe a couple of times—the member for Willowdale could get the experience from the other side of the chamber.

One of the things I really believe: Nobody should be elected directly to government. I really, really, really believe that. If somehow you could work it out so that your first election results in you being in the opposition, that would be—it's incredible. It really changes your approach to things once you are on the other side of the House. Mind you, I remained in opposition even when I was on the other side of the House. There's something genetic about it; some DNA encryption.

But as I say, the member for Willowdale—I'll say this: The member for Willowdale deserves to be re-elected. He's a very effective, capable member of the assembly and should have been in cabinet. I don't know what he did or said to either the Premier or to the people who surround the Premier to get himself excluded from cabinet. But having said that, he's probably better off.

Interjection: Better chance of re-election.

Mr. Peter Kormos: As my colleague points out, why should Mr. Zimmer let the Premier ride his coattails? I say to the parliamentary assistant: No, you tell your leader he's on his own. You have every intention of coming back to this chamber, because you're not finished yet.

The minister was quite right when he said we have a good working relationship, and he was quite wise to put Mr. Zimmer in charge of the carriage of this bill. You notice that the ministers are always around for the klieg lights and when the TV cameras are whirring, but when it comes time for the heavy lifting, no, no, no, they're nowhere to be seen. They're relying upon the talent, skill and experience of the Mr. Zimmers of the world.

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Now, the government House leader is in this House, and she's scowling. She's scowling.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: For the record, I'm shaking my head.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm responding to her now.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm responding to the government House leader again, if Hansard, in fact, was able to hear her. I take that as a compliment, government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: A lot of affection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And I tell you, your affection for me is returned.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Look, I would have wished you well as well. If you hadn't gone and walked the plank and said farewell to your colleagues, you would have been one of the people I would have encouraged to campaign hard, perhaps harder than you've ever had to before, to get yourself into this chamber come the next provincial Parliament. As I say, I'm not sure I'm going to be here. It's up to the people of Welland whether or not they return me to Queen's Park. I'm eager to come back, and I'm eager to see some of my colleagues upon my return, should I be blessed with that by the electorate.

As I indicated to the government House leader, to the parliamentary assistant and, indeed, to Minister Bradley, New Democrats won't be belabouring this bill here on second reading. We may have one or two members who want to speak to it in addition to the extent to which it's been addressed. We do want to get it into committee. I don't expect the committee to sit other than in Toronto. I think we want to get the briefings that I've suggested we need from the ministry, the parliamentary assistant and the huge staff component that he can access in the ministry. I look forward to the discussion of the bill in committee.

Two other things: I would dearly like to know from the parliamentary assistant, when it comes time for committee, what the province of Ontario has done with our federal government in terms of amending legislation that has to be amended so that young offenders who are convicted of sexual offences can be listed on the sex offender registry. I believe that's a serious, serious omission, because a 17-and-a-half-year-old who rapes a victim is going to soon be 18 and is as much a danger to similar victims as an 18-and-a-half-year-old.

For the life of me, if the argument's being made that, first of all, you're not publishing names because it isn't a public registry—nobody's telling the police that they have to somehow white out all documents that they have in their possession that deal with a young offender; of course not. Police keep those records. Why are young offenders not included in the sex offender registry? I think that's a horrible omission and a horrible oversight.

Time is curing the second point, but the parliamentary assistant will know that when the original bill first came before the chamber in 2000, I was concerned about the fact that it wasn't retroactive. Now 10 years have passed, but there's still surely a big chunk of sexual offenders out there who committed their offences prior to the enactment of the legislation who aren't on the database. If the validity or value of that database is dependent on it being as complete as possible, as full as possible, then surely people who have historic records for sexual offences should be on the registry.

That was something that I recall prevailing upon the then parliamentary assistant when the bill was before committee back in the year 2000. Now, in 20 or 30 years' time, that will be cured by time itself, but we've still got 20 or 30 years to go before that's rectified. I'm going to be putting that to the parliamentary assistant again to find out why this legislation doesn't have an element of retroactivity so that we can truly make best efforts to protect potential victims.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, just let me address the point that was raised by the member from Welland: questions about the distinction between a pardon granted under the Criminal Records Act and a free pardon grant-

ed under the Criminal Code. The answer to that question is that administrative pardons granted under the Criminal Records Act allow persons convicted of a criminal offence, if they have completed their sentence and they have demonstrated that they're law-abiding citizens for a number of years and so on, to have their criminal record—and here are the magic words, or the relevant words—kept separate and apart from other criminal records, and no one has access to the records that are kept apart.

But in the case of sexual offenders, although the record will be kept apart, their name will be flagged in the Canadian Police Information Centre computer system to assist police officers in the investigation of an offence.

Now, free pardons are granted under the Criminal Code, and a free pardon is granted when someone, for instance, has been found wrongfully convicted. When they're found wrongfully convicted, it's as if they had never committed the offence in the first place, and hence they're pardoned. Because they're deemed never to have committed the offence, there cannot be any record at all, so there's a technical distinction between an administrative pardon under the Criminal Records Act and a free pardon.

I know sometimes that's difficult to understand, but I'm sure that we'll explore that in more detail in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I much appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 163 and comment on some of the comments from the member from Welland. There are a number of issues that I'd like to bring up, and hopefully I'll get a chance to debate this at another time.

First of all, in regard to the member's statement regarding young offenders being on the registry, I would agree completely. When the information—it's a vulnerable persons check, and I'm debating my own private member's bill on this very issue on Thursday. It's a vulnerable persons check that's transferred to the police. There is nothing under the young offender's information that is passed on at that particular time, so when that information is passed to the organization that is doing the checks and the reviews, no information is passed on to them. So, yes, there isn't anything. I'm not sure how valid the information would be if it can't be utilized in any way, shape or form.

Some of the other things: The member mentioned California in 1944; the sex offenders registry at that time mostly dealt with homosexual issues.

I hope the PA will be able to address this issue somewhat: the International Transfer of Offenders Act and how that is applicable in some jurisdictions, throughout many nations, predominantly African nations, where homosexuality is still an offence. Would those individuals be put on the registry there and then be required to be registered here for something that is not viewed, in any way, shape or form, as an offence here in the province of Ontario?

As well, one of the strong concerns was—I sat on the Auditor General's committee, and it was specifically brought out at that time that the Ontario registry was far stronger than the federal one. I hope what we're seeing here is not a weakening of the Ontario registry to comply with the federal one.

One of the other areas that needs to be addressed is the cross-jurisdictional requirement between provinces. When an individual transfers from one province to another, there was basically no requirement to be listed in Ontario, which I'm hoping will take place.

The last one would be—well, there are a number of aspects, but what about multiple convictions and the ability for notification of those individuals?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as always, to the member from Welland. Sometimes he entertains me; sometimes he informs me. Today, it was the latter. He spoke very well, he was reasoned, he was passionate in his debate and he brought out facts that I think many of us in this chamber have not considered.

He talked about the retroactivity—going back some 10 years and what happened in 2000 and how he had hoped at that point that the list would have been retroactive so that police would have known of past offences—and perhaps how we missed that target but how he still hopes that it will happen. He talked about people who are juveniles under the law—a 17½-year-old who commits particularly heinous crimes; rape or those kinds of crimes—and their likelihood to re-offend.

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It took me back to the time when I worked in the immigration department and the many years that I spent before the immigration refugee board. The overwhelming majority of people who are brought before that board for criminal offences and were subject to deportation were under 25 years of age. It just seemed to me that that's when the crimes were happening, in people's youth, and that as people got older you were less and less likely to see them, either because the incarcerations worked and they didn't want to go back there anymore, as the member from Welland spoke about, but also because it's just a thing that happens. I think we need to know that those 17½-year-olds are out there every bit as much as we need to know the 18-plus are out there.

He also talked about pardons, and my friend from Willowdale there spoke about that, and I think that's a good point.

I look forward to this going to committee and I look forward to speedy passage. I think all members on all sides of the House hope this happens.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to briefly comment on the remarks from the member from Welland.

I think he made a very thorough presentation on the bill in front of us today. I was not around in this chamber in 1988, when some of the unfortunate events took place

in the early stages. The fact that Ontario became the one province—and remains the only province—with its own registry, I think, is an important point to keep in mind.

One of the points that is important—and I don't know if the member from Welland brought this up—is that having a registry here in Ontario allows the police forces here in Ontario, including the Toronto police and other police forces, to have access to our registry. The national registry allows only the Ontario Provincial Police to access that registry. So I think it's an important point to keep in mind. I think that the national registry is a good thing. It doesn't go far enough. Having our bill here, the act in front of us today, allows additional safeguards to be put into place.

The two minutes—well, the last 45 seconds that I have—don't allow me to get into any detail on this. It's better dealt with at committee. I don't know if this will go to the justice policy committee, but if it does, I'd be pleased to listen to the debate there and take part in it if I'm allowed to.

Basically, this is an additional safeguard to the national registry that's in place. I think we need this additional safeguard. These seem to be technical amendments, but I'm quite sure, from what I've read in the bill so far, that they will strengthen our system to prevent sex offenders from re-offending.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate the patience of those who bore with me for 60 minutes while I was making the NDP's contribution to the debate on this bill. I'm looking forward to committee. You've heard my colleague from Beaches–East York indicate that the bill should move forward at a reasonable pace: not so speedily that it isn't given the appropriate attention and due attention, not so speedily that we avoid our responsibility to do due diligence, but so that it can in fact become law.

As I understand from listening to the Solicitor General during his introductory remarks, the ones in which he praised the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer, so much, this is effectively making sure that our sex offender registry here in the province of Ontario complies or is in sync with the federal sex offender registry.

As I say, I've raised a number of questions here and, having put them to the parliamentary assistant, I trust that his staff will start accumulating some of the responses to those questions promptly. He's not one of these people who shows up at committee with a whole long row of bag-carriers behind him; the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer, carries his own briefcase and pours his own water, and that's to his credit. But I do expect him to ask the legions of staff available to him to start preparing some of the briefing papers around these issues as promptly as possible, sooner rather than later. It'll simply make committee all that much more effective.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I am going to use the little bit of time that's remaining in order to get some issues on the record regarding this.

There's quite a bit of aspects that I mentioned earlier on. I'm just hoping that the Auditor General's remarks regarding Ontario being stronger and that the federal government's legislation is far weaker is something that we're not moving towards here, because there would be a strong concern from myself that we need to protect vulnerable individuals in any way, shape or form that we can.

Some of the aspects that, upon reading the bill, need to be talked about eventually; there are certain things. Registered sex offenders, a lot of times, have parameters put on them. What takes place in the case—and this was something that was brought forward to myself by a number of police officers—of voting requirements, with the federal election on now? These individuals are not allowed to go into schools to vote. What takes place for situations like that, and how are they going to be taken care of? Is there any consideration being looked at regarding that?

I briefly mentioned earlier, on the cross-jurisdictional aspect, whereby individuals transferring from province to province—there's no notification coming forward. Hopefully, working with the feds on their registry will address that key issue.

Something else as well: There's a lot of concern coming forward regarding the background checks for individuals who are volunteering. What's taking place is there's a fingerprint requirement that's happening now. The way they're determining that—and I didn't hear it come forward in the debate here this afternoon—is that individuals with the same birth date as a convicted offender are now required to provide fingerprints so they can be assured they're not the sex offender, because of the ability for sex offenders to change their name. That was the only way that they were able to check. So I had a number of, quite frankly, longtime police officers who were the first ones who had to submit fingerprints in order to coach kids' hockey. As many here know, I coach kids' hockey as well. They had to submit their own fingerprints, even though they're police officers, because of what's taking place.

On page 2, it talks specifically about, "within the prescribed period after he or she changes his or her name." I'm wondering how that's going to play out to those individuals in the vulnerable persons check and how it's going to be applicable later on. Is that going to solve the problem? Or is it going to get much larger now, because there's going to be more of a requirement for individuals to submit their fingerprints on that basis?

I heard individuals talk about the same name. Quite frankly, on some of these checks, the first time or the second time—actually, it was the second time. We had to have an annual reporting for a background check. I opened up my background check and, lo and behold, it was somebody else in there—it wasn't myself at all—with the same name. So I went back to the station and I said, "Hey, wait a sec. This is not me." Quickly, they apologized and went back in. So there are mistakes being made with this information.

Not only that, but it also shows the number of charges that have been put upon an individual. The reason for that is that when they do a vulnerable persons check, it specifically says, "Do you want somebody who has been charged, say, five times with drug trafficking going to coach minor bantam kids' hockey with kids at 14 years old?" How are you going to want those individuals around that? Or somebody's had a drunk driving charge. It's not a sex offender check, but a vulnerable persons check, so there's a lot more in it, there. Someone could be driving kids to hockey who has had a number of offences. You just want to make sure that due diligence is done in a particular number of cases regarding this.

Some of the other aspects: We talked about the International Transfer of Offenders Act, but look what's happened with Roman Polanski particularly, going to Switzerland to avoid what took place with a 13-year-old in the United States. Not only that, but then look at Jerry Lee Lewis; take it even further than that, where he married his 13-year-old cousin, for that matter. These are the sorts of things that, when we're talking about international offenders and what's taking place, we need to make sure of how it's going to be applied in the province of Ontario. We all have to do whatever we can in the best interests and to protect as many people as possible.

Not only that, but the one big concern I have is that I had one individual who had 10 convictions and who was released into the public, into the city of Oshawa, and there was no ability, other than myself standing in the Legislature, of identifying the individual as being released into the community; there was no ability for anyone else around the schools or notification to the schools that the individual was there. These are the sorts of things that I hope we can address through committee and through further debate.

I know the time is ending. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 o'clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Tuesday 29 March 2011

Mardi 29 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We will begin with the Lord's Prayer, and then the nondenominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a privilege to stand here and speak to this debate. I want to preface my remarks by an amazing event that I attended at the injured worker speaker school on March 22, because what was told to me that night by six very eloquent speakers speaks volumes to what this bill is about, or what this bill should contain and does not.

There were six speakers. They came from many lands, but they all suffered the same fate. They had been employed in factories, in hospitals and at hotels, and they found themselves without any protection under workers' compensation and with no protection with workplace health and safety.

The first speaker was named Flores. She gave an absolutely excellent account of the history of the WSIB and how it had failed her. She talked with great pathos. She talked about how, in the end, all of the money went to protect the employer and not the employee, and how she found herself destitute. She was a nurse and found herself destitute and today is living in poverty because the employer did not protect her in the workplace and because there were inadequate health and safety protections for workers such as nurses.

The second speaker up was named Shu Fang Ren. He had a delightful sense of humour and he talked about the work that he was forced to do—very heavy menial work, pushing around huge bins—until his back gave out. At 56 years of age, it has been very difficult for him to get other jobs. The employer did not protect him in the workplace, and today, they send him off to school.

He told a very poignant and funny tale. Because he was a Chinese national—he's now a Canadian citizen—his English was not very good. After he hurt himself, the Workers' Compensation Board, or WSIB, said that they were going to send him back to school to improve his English so that he could get other work.

He started at grade 2 English. He studied for two months and had made it to grade 4 English, and really wanted to get grade 10 English so that he could apply for jobs that did not require heavy lifting for a man of 56 years of age with a bad back. When the school found out that that was the only requirement left, in one night he was magically awarded grade 12 English. He wondered how he was able to gain eight grades in a single night. He thought it was magic.

Heather stood up and she told a very good story about being a hotel employee at the Royal York Hotel. She was actually a singing waiter until she succumbed to mould. She collapsed on the floor, and it was later discovered that there was mould throughout her workplace and that she was so hypersensitive and allergic to mould she couldn't work there anymore. The hotel, of course, won't pay, and she is—again, just like all the others—left with no money, no career.

We had Basil, who commented that he had appeal after appeal. He was a new immigrant. He got a job, and he became permanently disabled. He's had depression and fear. He had a very good analogy called the luxury ship, and when he read his speech he talked about that. He hired a lawyer and has been fighting for five years for better health and safety. His life was shattered.

Amy Leung stood up. She too worked as a nurse, and she said that the WSIB was nothing more than a fantasy, because nobody was there to protect her health and safety, and none of the safeguards were available to her after she was injured. All they keep wanting her to do is return to work, which she simply cannot, given the circumstances of her life.

The last speaker was a gentleman named Negassy. He started out saying he was a very proud Canadian, but by the end of the speech one had to wonder why, given everything that had happened to him. He has gone to appeal after appeal on health and safety issues, and nothing has ever happened. He talked about having a bare cupboard, having to go down to the food bank. He talked about his children, who are now suffering because they're in high school and he can no longer afford to have them looked after, not having any monies coming in. He is an older worker—again, 56 years of age—and he talked poignantly about politicians and their failings, about how the bills that are put forward never seem to be enough.

I say all this because I don't think, for all the good intentions of this bill, that enough has been done. I want to echo what I heard on March 22 from six very good speakers who had something to tell us. I wish all members of the Legislature could hear that and see the real-life crises of people where the system has absolutely and totally failed them: people who expected health and safety protocols in their workplaces; people who expected to be protected; people who relied on the WSIB, only to be turned down, appeal after appeal; people who were sent for meaningless work training upgrades, knowing full well that they would never get jobs; people who magically, in one night, could get eight grades of English awarded to them simply because the WSIB wanted to wash their hands of them and their problems.

New Democrats feel that this bill does not go far enough. New Democrats feel that a whole bunch of things have to happen before this bill meets the conditions set out in the Dean report. This bill was a half-hearted attempt, as many Liberal bills are, to partially go towards what needs to be done. Every day I listen to the Premier and ministers saying, "This is a good first step." Everything is a first step. Nothing is ever doing what needs to be done to remedy the situation.

There are some amendments that need to be made to this bill before New Democrats would even consider supporting it; I have a whole list of them here. Firstly, we need to clearly articulate the powers of the chief prevention officer in the bill so that there is a clear accountability and authority to effectively lead and manage the prevention system.

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We need to require that the minister give the prevention council and the chief prevention officer 30 days' notice and reasons for any intent to change the delegated authorities.

We need to require the minister to consult with the chief prevention officer of intent to make a significant change to the prevention system, including exercising the minister's powers under sections 22.4, 22.5 and 22.6.

We need to include a statement similar to section 5 of the clean drinking water act to require the minister to consider recommendations of the chief prevention officer and the prevention council in exercising the minister's powers and duties.

We need to require that the prevention council shall be composed of an equal number of members representing employers and trade unions and restricting the number of other members appointed to the prevention council to no more than one third of the council's membership.

We need to include a statement in Bill 160, under the minister's duties, similar to the purpose section of WSIA that states that its purpose is to promote health and safety in workplaces and prevent and reduce the occurrence of workplace injuries and disease.

We need to reduce the documentation that a co-chair of a joint health and safety committee must provide to an employer under subsection 7(1) of Bill 160 to make it less onerous on a co-chair to exercise this right.

We need to enable an inspector to be permitted to appear before the Ontario Labour Relations Board in situations where an inspector has direct evidence of an alleged reprisal on a worker.

We need to change the threshold to 50 employees for the Office of the Employer Adviser to provide support to small business in section 50 reprisals, rather than the 100 set out in Bill 160.

We need to make the wording in section 12 clearer. Some stakeholders have commented that stating that "a failure to comply with a code of practice is not a breach of the legal requirement" does not make it clear that there is an opportunity to consider other practices instead of the code. Those are just some of the things that need to happen.

New Democrats hope that this bill will be strengthened. It is now, at most, a half-hearted measure to meet some of the needs of employees halfway, while at the same time, of course, protecting employers. We believe that the employees need far greater protection. Those people who stood up and poured out their hearts at the injured workers' speaking school need to be heard, and they need to be heard with a better bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I was listening to the member from Beaches—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: East York.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Beaches–East York; thank you.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's the riding right next to yours.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I know. I keep wanting to say "Beaches." Beaches–East York.

I know his stories about the vulnerability of workers are shared amongst all three parties. Many other previous speakers on this bill have brought up similar stories about vulnerable workers or workers who are not getting enough training or protection at their workplace.

The new bill that's being proposed here, Bill 160, does create, as was pointed out earlier, a chief prevention officer, but it's also important to understand that that officer has a prevention council made up of three different groups: labour, employers and safety experts. All those people will work together and provide advice to the chief prevention officer, who will then provide advice to the

minister. I think this is all based on the Tony Dean report, which was prepared over the past several months. As a result, this bill has come forward.

It's quite evident in the bill that we're here to protect workers and we're providing extra enhancements to the workplace environment, especially for health and safety issues. That's why this bill amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act more than any other bill has done in the past 30 years. Of course, the other bill that's being amended is the WSIA, and those changes, I think, are quite significant in making sure that workers are protected.

I look forward to this going to committee and further debate on this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide a couple of comments on the speech from the member for Beaches–East York.

I appreciate also the comment just made by the member for Scarborough Southwest about committees, because I've received a number of emails already about this bill going to committee. Unfortunately, the emails that I've received haven't really flushed out the concerns or the questions of some of the constituents, but I know that this bill has a tremendous amount of interest. I know that many support the intent of the bill, and I appreciate the speech that the member for Beaches–East York made.

However, I know that there is some concern about the creation of a new bureaucracy, a new agency. I know that there are many concerns about creating a new level of bureaucratic committee that would deal with it, but I think, from our perspective, many on our benches on this side support the intent of the motion. I know that occupational health and safety is a very important aspect.

I learned a lot, both from the workers' side and from the management side, in my years in the newspaper industry. That was my first opportunity to be on a committee and to chair, and I know how much education is key to coordinating employees and management on occupational health and safety. In those years that I had in that local industrial setting I learned a lot, and I was given the opportunity to take courses and understand how to operate and manage in a safe workplace.

So I appreciate some of the concerns that Mr. Prue has brought forward and I look forward to hearing from those constituents who are emailing me, when Bill 160 gets to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member from Beaches–East York for his comments. In this portfolio, I certainly am not happy with some of the parts of this bill that are weak, to say the least. Once again, we're putting half-measures forward and we're not dealing with it properly.

We've had lots of concerns from safety groups throughout the province about many aspects. Two of the most important aspects that I'm concerned about are that it's giving the ministry too much power and, also, it does not allow ministry inspectors the power to investigate alleged reprisals, to reinstate workers and to order back pay and damages, and also fine the companies on the spot. That's an important part of this function, because I know, when I was in industry, that lots of times the ministry would order a company to fix a particular piece of equipment within a certain period of time. The company would drag its feet. The inspector wouldn't get around to the company for three or four months, and then an individual worker would be injured or killed, even though the order had been in place. The company would get a slap on the hand and a "You shouldn't have done that," instead of serious fines and reprisals from the ministry for their lack of initiative and lack of following the orders given.

So I believe that an inspector who is designated by the ministry to carry out the rules of the ministry should have the ability to fine and shut down equipment and places of work if they haven't complied with the orders that he has issued. That's where we lack. I've seen it many times over the years where people have been injured unnecessarily because of lack of attention and lack of enforcement, and that has to be changed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I rise to make some comments on Bill 160, which is actually the Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act. We have been debating this for some time now in the House, and I think there have been some very reasoned comments made to the bill. I suspect that this bill, like most of our government bills, will go to committee and there will be more conversation, at least, about this bill. Perhaps there will be some amendments; one never knows about that, but the committee will do its work in that regard.

Of course, this bill and the proposed amendments are flowing from the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety, which has been mentioned by others, and the fact that it was chaired by Tony Dean and was composed of representatives of labour, employers and academia. We need to thank them for their fine work in putting forth their efforts into finding solutions.

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The expert panel consulted extensively across Ontario. They didn't work within a vacuum; they went out and heard from other people. They received 400 responses from employer and worker groups and held 50 meetings across the province. We need to thank all those people for their fine work and for bringing forth something that the government could put into place, as we are debating here today.

We're moving forward with the changes to our health and safety system that will make workplaces safer for all our workers here in Ontario and ensure that they come home safe each and every day. Employees would have enhanced safety training and a more effective reprisal complaint process. I think that's very important in a

modern world, where they have at least that safeguard. There are many more mentioned throughout the bill that would assist people, help save lives and prevent injury among Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Scarborough Southwest, Leeds–Grenville, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Chatham–Kent–Essex for their fine comments.

The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex made a very good statement about the Tony Dean report and all the work that went into that report, from employers and from labour and from people who have been injured—all the deputations. All we are saying in the NDP caucus is, please implement all of the recommendations. The failure of this bill is not because the bill is doing nothing; it is taking little tiny steps. But the Dean report quite clearly set out things that are not contained within the body of this bill, and for the fine work they've done, all of the recommendations should be contained within the four walls of the bill.

The member from Scarborough Southwest: I know he's the PA and he has to defend the bill, but he did say something very important, and that is that the government is looking forward to committee and possible amendments. We can only hope that the amendments that we are suggesting might strengthen the bill and that it might be made good for all people.

The member for Leeds–Grenville talked about emails and changes to the bill that are coming now into his office. I think it's quite clear that all MPPs are getting these kinds of emails and people saying, "Well, look: I'm looking at this bill and it can be better." We are here to say that it can be made better, and in our view, it must be made better before we can support it at third reading.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked about it being a weak bill and about the lack of reprisal powers, and I think this is key to the bill. If a worker is going to endure a reprisal from an employer for taking up the cudgel and fighting for himself or herself and fellow employees, then I think we need to protect them. The bill needs to have that insurance that anyone who stands up for their rights will not be subject to dismissal.

I thank the members for their comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let's face it: To put it simply, it's not a safe place to work in Ontario, anywhere. Under the current system—and to give a backdrop to Bill 160—this is a Legislature, a government, under McGuinty which has just taken away the right to strike. The very basic right of any worker is to withhold their labour. The very basic right of a worker is to withhold their labour under dangerous or threatening circumstances. We've just taken it away, in this Legislature, from a whole body of workers who work for the transit union. That's the backdrop.

Another backdrop to this bill is the fact that we refuse to pass anti-scab legislation in this House. Again, the very basis for occupational safety is threatened when you have scab labour brought in during a strike. This is a government that refuses to pass anti-scab legislation. This is a government that refuses, except in some instances, to pass card-check certification, which would allow the extension of unionization to workers who aren't unionized. We should all know that the real protection for any worker in the workplace comes from collective bargaining; it comes from a union that backs you up. This is a government that refused that.

This is a government that puts itself in the role of a kind of ambulance chaser: When something horrific happens, like migrant workers falling off scaffolds or Lori Dupont getting killed in her workplace, then and only then do they act, and they act with something as small and tepid as Bill 160, which really won't save any lives. Because that's what we're talking about here this morning: saving lives of workers. To do so, you don't react after the fact. You actually act to prevent deaths and injuries in the first place, and this bill won't do that. In essence, that's why we in the New Democratic Party have problems with this bill. It won't save lives. It won't prevent injuries. This bill won't do that. My colleague from Beaches–East York was absolutely correct when he talked about the Dean report and its recommendations. At the very least, this government should adopt those recommendations—at the very least.

I have a motion on the order paper calling for a 25%, one-time inspection rate for all places of employment. We don't have adequate inspection in this province for employment standards or for occupational health and safety. We simply don't have it; it does not exist. Only one in 100 places of employment will ever see an inspector from the Ministry of Labour.

I'm not alone. I know that many members of provincial Parliament here have stories from their constituency offices of folk who come in and talk about the very basic employment standards being breached, the very basic occupational health and safety standards being breached in places of employment, and employees virtually helpless to do anything about it. Why? Because they'll lose their jobs. Dangerous though they maybe, illegal though they might be, they'll lose their jobs. They have to work to feed themselves and to pay the rent.

There's nothing we're doing here that is going to prevent that from happening, that is going to protect them. I certainly have had many, particularly from racialized communities, who've come into my office, who talk about employers who don't pay minimum wage, employers who force them to work on construction sites without the basic safety implementations. When I say, "Can we complain on your behalf to the Ministry of Labour?", they say, "No, no, no. Please don't. I'll lose my job and I also might lose my status," if they happen to be illegal. "I also might lose my status."

This bill doesn't help them, doesn't address them. It doesn't protect the whistleblowers who want to come forward, who want to complain, but who need a job. It doesn't protect them. It doesn't enforce the very basic

standards in a way that makes employers sit up and listen. You've got to have adequate enforcement if you're going to actually have laws that work. This bill doesn't address adequate enforcement. My colleague from Hamilton–Stoney Creek talked about the politicization in this bill of roles that shouldn't be politicized, that shouldn't come under the ministry, that should have some arm's length from the ministry. That's also in this bill. That's a negative.

Another bill that's before this House is around post-traumatic stress disorder. There's a whole series of injuries, if you will, that aren't covered at all for our front-line workers, those whom we send into something approximating battle from time to time. Paramedics, police, firefighters who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder are not covered. There's no presumed diagnosis for any of that. That's not covered.

Home care workers and migrant workers who are forbidden to unionize—nothing addressing that. That puts them at incredible risk. Home care workers who work on their own in a home, surrounded by employers—frightened to call. We've dealt with this in many ways in this House, but we haven't dealt with it, because they're still out there. They're still working. They're still unsafe. They still can't unionize. This bill doesn't address that either.

What would we in the New Democratic Party like to see in terms of workplace safety in the province of Ontario? First of all, we'd like to see some. This bill doesn't give us some. It doesn't give us external enforcement; it doesn't provide internal enforcement. I addressed that with the whistleblower aspect. It doesn't enforce and strengthen the reprisal provisions of the OHSA. It doesn't improve and extend health and safety training in a way that's meaningful. It doesn't increase health and safety support and resources for workers. It doesn't provide a regular review of health and safety systems legislation and regulations. So the very question is, what does this bill do? What does Bill 160 do?

I'll tell you what it does. It's a public relations gesture on behalf of the McGuinty Liberals. That's what it is. It's a public relations gesture, like so many of the bills we see in this place; a kind of nod that, "Oh, there's a problem, and yes, there should be some solution." But it's not the solution. It's not the Dean report recommendations put into law. That's not what we have in front of us. That's what we hoped to have in front of us, at the very least. That's not what we have in front of us.

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We have a public relations gesture that actually could be more dangerous than it is helpful. That's what we have in Bill 160, and it's severely disappointing. It's beyond disappointing, because we're talking about lives at risk here. Those same lives that were at risk before this bill was penned are still at risk: that's what the viewers at home need to know. This does not change that. This does not help them. This would not prevent the deaths that we've seen in Ontario. This would not come close. In a sense, it's simply a nod, as I say, in a kind of ambulance-chasing way, that after the fact we should appear to be doing something.

In a very real way, Bill 160 is an insult to the families of those victims, the families of those injured workers who need this government to act; who need somebody to take their side, because right now their situation is as precarious as it can be.

My colleague from Beaches–East York went through the recommendations that we've heard from our labour friends to amend Bill 160. Certainly, when it comes to the committee stage, you will find New Democrats there arguing for those amendments. But it's a very sad day when, really, a bill on such an important topic, the very lives and limbs of our workers in the province of Ontario, is put forward in such a callous way, in a way that says, "We want to appear to do something, but we won't really do anything."

I think New Democrats, and the public in Ontario, quite frankly, have long lost patience with such moves by government. The public in Ontario would really like to see action to prevent the kinds of deaths we've witnessed in the time that we've sat here during this Parliament. They'd really like to see actions to prevent the kinds of deaths that we read about: the Lori Duponts, the migrant workers, the nannies. This bill does none of that.

In short, we look forward to the committee, where we will, again, push for amendments; push for amendments, I must say, without a great deal of hope for getting them.

This is, in fact, a historic opportunity lost. This is a historic opportunity lost to prevent the deaths that will most certainly occur in the future because of the lack of any kind of real legislative push in this bill, Bill 160. In a very real way, it's worse than doing nothing. It appears to do something when we need dramatic action.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Parkdale–High Park.

We're all concerned about labour. We're all concerned about what's going on outside in the workplace. Although we can say that this is a knee-jerk reaction, this is, I would argue, an evolutionary change in workplace culture. Mr. Tony Dean, in his report, mentions that there is a culture out there that needs to be changed and provides recommendations. Those recommendations can be debated as to how important or not important they are, but I would argue that they are important in the fact that they create a chief prevention officer and a chief prevention council. As I was mentioning earlier, the council will provide advice to the prevention officer, who then will provide that advice to the minister, and the minister will have to be accountable to this House. If the opposition asks questions about what is happening out there in the labour world, the minister is accountable for that.

There's lots of criticism about the bill. The bottom line is, this is a system integration. We have two major pieces of legislation that are out there, the Occupational Health and Safety Act and an act that governs the WSIB, and they're kind of working on their own. What this bill does

is, it brings them together to work together and have everything reported through the chief prevention officer and the council. It's a substantial change, I would argue, to the present system that we have right now. System integration is the key to making this transition to a whole new system.

This is why this bill is not an end; this bill is a beginning. There will be further consultation. I'm sure that the chief prevention officer, with his council, will provide further information to the Minister of Labour, and that will cause more debate in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Parkdale–High Park always brings insight and passion to debates on almost all bills, and there's no exception in Bill 160.

We're of the view that the tragedy back in 2009—certainly the government's response has been to bring in, if you will, the armaments of a government that's trying to do something. In fact, if you really look at it, in fairness, there were already rules in workplace safety that could have intervened and been responded to more quickly and appropriately for these families who have now been altered by an accident by perhaps unscrupulous operators. I don't think this bill will ever change that. It drives things underground.

Now they have created another level of bureaucracy, which is more red tape, sort of like the Ontario Power Authority: another level that will bring in some highly paid experts. I admire and appreciate the work done by Tony Dean, former assistant Deputy Minister of Labour when Elizabeth Witmer was minister, I believe, and his experience as secretary to cabinet. He prepared a report with the best of intentions, with some well-known experts.

I'm curious about this role of the chief prevention officer. I understand from the bill that there are some provisions that there will be some outlined duties to investigate, but it actually removes some of the powers under the current provision and uploads them, if you will, or downloads them to the chief prevention officer. This would be in consultation, I hope, with the WSIB, which is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

Here again we have another solution to a problem that is to build up more bureaucracy. Really, those families and those workers still remain exposed, in my view.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member from Parkdale–High Park. She hit on some very important parts and some aspects of this bill that are not covering the needs of the workers of this province. We in the NDP are certainly not happy with a lot of the content of this bill. We think the bill has simply been put forward to appease certain friends of the governing body, and I really don't think that's the way you should go about this.

The member from Scarborough Southwest says that it's a good start, and it's moving in the right direction. Listen, I've been in industry myself for over 35 years. Why are we starting now? If we're going to do it, why aren't we going to do it right? Don't piecemeal it. This is not new knowledge, that people get injured at work; it's not new that people get killed on the job.

If you're going to do a bill that covers health and safety, do it right, and make sure that the inspectors have the power to follow the ministry's guidelines and follow their rules so that they can go into the workplace and fine the company—and not just a little tap on the wrist. If they don't follow the orders of the inspector, if they fall short and someone gets injured between the time the inspector had been there until the implementation of what they should have done, then they should be hit hard. The only way you're going to get the attention of business and companies in this province is to hit them hard if they don't follow safety to protect the people who work in their facilities, because they have to go home to their families and be safe. That's critical.

Everyone talks about safety; everyone talks about wanting the same thing, but if you don't enforce it, they're not going to take you seriously. They haven't for the last 85 or 90 years in this province because you don't do anything. You talk a good game, but nothing happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to speak this morning as both an employer and an employee with union staff and non-union staff and to represent all sides. My company is now run by one of my family members, but over 50 years, I've certainly seen more than my fair share of safety concerns and the dos and don'ts of what should be done for the safety of our staff and the safety of all employees.

0940

It's ironic; one of the first comments I noticed on this was that we're here to make sure that workers come home from the jobsite at the end of the day. That was pretty much always our theory. We worked with people. We found that there were errors on both sides. As an employer, you have to take responsibility for some of those errors. Some of your employees can do little safety things, like take a guard off a machine. It might be regulated that the guard should be on the machine, but with this Bill 160, there's more strength and more enforcement in some of these items which escape us.

If you happen to take a guard off a machine and wrap a typical work rag around your fingers for convenience, in case you have to wash down a press plate or some such thing, the first thing you know, that rag could catch in the tip of a gear, pull the rag and pull your whole hand into the gear.

There's a multitude of things that we used to do on a monthly basis to provide safety and, again, I tell you that I really think the transfer of prevention responsibilities from the WSIB to labour is a very positive item. I'm positive that this is going to make a great deal of difference, and I fully add my support to Bill 160.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To put it succinctly, here's what this bill does not do: It does not adequately allow inspection that's meaningful of enough workplaces; it does not allow meaningful enforcement; it does not allow, truly, the right to refuse unsafe work; it certainly doesn't do anything—and neither does this government—to increase real protection for workers, which is increased unionization.

This is a government, remember, that doesn't support anti-scab legislation, that doesn't support card-check certification for everyone and, in fact, took away the very right to withdraw labour from a whole group of labourers who work for the transit union. So this government is not pro-union; it's anti-union. That is the most dangerous reality for workers.

Finally, what we've got in the bill is a public relations gesture that seems to do something about the Dean report recommendations but actually doesn't. Our labour allies and friends have said it very succinctly. They've said, "Kill a worker, go to jail." There's nothing in this legislation that says that. There's nothing in the legislation that says that if you kill a worker you should go to jail. In fact, what this legislation really says is, "Kill a worker, be subject to a review and maybe a fine."

If you're a worker in the province of Ontario, watch out. If you are the family of workers in Ontario, watch out. You're not safe. You weren't safe before Bill 160, and guess what? You're not safe after Bill 160, either.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be a deferred vote until after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2011, on a motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It came as a little surprise; I didn't realize the government was going to call this bill this morning. I didn't come here with my notes, so I'm going to have to wing it.

I had an opportunity yesterday to be in the House when the member from Welland stood up, and he spoke quite brilliantly and quite passionately for an hour of the many things that were wrong with the bill. One of the things that he said which struck me and which I think bears repeating is that there is no provision in the bill that will allow for people who are minors at the time of committing serious sexual offences to be included in the registry. The member from Welland put it quite rightly: A person who is 17½ years old who commits a sexual assault on another person would be protected under the law and could not be included in the registry.

I do know, and I will say quite publicly, that I support the Young Offenders Act—and I know many people in this country do not—because we need to protect the overwhelming majority of young offenders from having criminal records and from going through the same justice system as adults because, by and large, most of the offences committed by young people are not hugely serious offences. They can be things like shoplifting. They can be things where young people get in trouble, maybe possession of marijuana; the kinds of things that one can expect in a young group of people who have not matured yet. I know that oftentimes, when you read in the newspaper all those clarion calls saying that we have to get tougher on youth offenders, I sometimes wonder whether this is well placed.

But I do have to tell you: If you get a violent youth offender who commits sexual assaults, I do not believe that there should be any freedom to exclude them from the list, because if you're going to commit that kind of crime at 17½, there is every reasonable possibility that you're going to commit it again at 18½. We need to look to that, the same way as my colleague from Welland said, and just wonder whether or not the correct decision has been made here.

He went on and talked about some other things in Christopher's Law. Quite frankly, the main point I wanted to make was that simple one right there. I wanted to make the point that I can support this bill, because I think we need to upgrade the list. We need to make sure that police have every opportunity to look at the list. But we also need to make sure that every single person who deserves to be on that list is contained within the body.

I think that's probably all of the 20 minutes that I need. I just wanted to make that point for the record. I hope that when this goes to committee, the members opposite will take a very good, hard look at it.

I am mindful of the constitutional argument and the whole thing around young offenders. I am very mindful of that, but I also think that the protection of our most vulnerable people, our children and women in this province, needs to be safeguarded. Whatever we can do together in a non-partisan way to do that is, of course, important.

I look forward to this going to committee. I look forward to some considerable debate and input from all

sectors of society. We need to strengthen this bill and make it even stronger than it is now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. David Zimmer: We've had debate about a lot of the details of the bill, but I just wanted to lay out three points which really cover the rationale for the bill; the context of the bill, if you will.

As you know—and I think I've made the point earlier in my remarks—there is a federal piece of legislation dealing with this issue of sex offenders and their names going into a registry. There is an Ontario piece of legislation that covers the business of sex offenders and how they should be placed into a registry and the various rules surrounding that. That's known colloquially by the acronym of Christopher's Law, which was legislation where Ontario was at the very cutting edge of social policy in dealing with the whole question of sex offenders. The two pieces of legislation require a registration under the federal legislation, and also a registration under the provincial piece of legislation. In examining the two pieces of legislation, federal and provincial, it became apparent that there were some inconsistencies—perhaps that's too strong a word, but some differences.

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We decided as a government that we really wanted to reconcile those two pieces of legislation for this purpose, to make sure that someone who should fairly and legitimately be in the registry is in the registry, and that nobody slips between the cracks. That's why we've introduced this legislation: to bring the two pieces, the federal and the provincial legislation, in sync. As the debate continues, we'll look into that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I look forward to a few minutes to speak to this bill myself, but suffice it to say that the New Democrats have long been supporters of a sex offender registry, period. The comments that I'll be making when it's my turn to speak—and I commend my colleague from Beaches–East York for saying what he has about the minors in this bill, and that, perhaps, is a loophole. We look forward to going to committee to strengthen the bill, not weaken it.

There are other aspects, too. We're dealing with some of the most horrendous crimes that humans can commit against humans—that of adults against children. I certainly live in a riding where this has been an issue. Maria Jones, the mother of Holly Jones—and I'm going to talk a bit about her—is in my riding and has made moves. Holly's law, which again is a motion on the order paper, attempts to deal with the prevention side of this because, as we know, most attacks upon children are not from a stranger. It's not "stranger danger"; it's family danger. So I'll talk about that.

I'll also talk about the horrendous statistics that if a child is abducted, the police have about an hour to catch the offender. About 40% of children or more are dead within the hour, and about 91% within 24 hours. We need to be able to give our police the tools. You can imagine the pressure upon them to find the perpetrator, and fast. We need to give them the tools they need.

So in what other ways can we strengthen the registry and the information it provides to actually do the job that it needs to do, so that police can catch the perpetrator, save the life of a child and do it quickly? That's the point of the sex offender registry.

How can we strengthen it? That's what I'll address in my few minutes, and kudos again to the member from Beaches–East York, especially for pointing out the problem, the loophole, around minors.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm pleased to stand up and speak to this bill which is before us today, Bill 163, to amend Christopher's Law.

Our government has proposed technical changes to the sex offender registry that, if passed, would align the provincial registry with recent changes to the federal government's national registry. We've proposed a number of amendments in the following areas for reporting obligations, which enable the province to require sex offenders to report within seven days instead of the current 15. In addition, offenders convicted outside of Canada would have to report, and the addition of sex offenders pardoned under the Criminal Records Act—prior to the proposed amendments coming forward.

To date, the Ontario sex offender registry has proven to be extremely effective. Our compliance rate is over 97%, which is the highest compliance rate of all sex offender registries in operation, including registries in the United States. One of the key points is that the Ontario sex offender registry is accessed by Ontario police services more than 745 times every day, on average. Of course, since 2003, overall crime in Ontario has declined by 17%, which is a surprising statistic, because other parties are always talking about crime punishment and building new jails, when we've actually seen the rate drop.

Even with the changes to the national sex offender registry, our provincial sex offender registry is superior in a number of respects. The national registry only provides access to the OPP, while the Ontario registry is open and accessible to all police services in the province, which provides much greater coverage and greater safety for the residents of Ontario.

I think it's a good move, and I look forward to hearing the remainder of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to focus on one aspect of this particular proposal, and that is to allow information to be shared between both the Ontario registry and the national registry to support local crime investigations and to help police services better protect their communities. While it's a phrase that you can say very quickly, the benefit is in the details and in making a clear interface between a national database and a provincial database.

Believe it or not, there are often legal silos that force the databases to essentially be islands of information. You ask yourself, how come you can't access information that's simply stored in another database? Very often the reason for that has to do with out-of-date regulations. So among the changes proposed in this particular law, Christopher's Law, are going to be regulations that allow the two databases to talk to one another so that information that's already entered at one level or the other can be quickly, efficiently shared between the national database and the provincial database. While that's just an afterthought in the bill or a small mention in the bill, it's perhaps one of the greatest benefits that the bill is going to confer on police forces and communities by assisting them to not have to reinvent the wheel, not have to re-key the data, and to be able to access the information that already exists and use it immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Willowdale, Parkdale–High Park, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Mississauga–Streetsville for their instructive comments.

I did now get a quote that I wanted to use in my speech which I didn't have. I think it's really important if we look back to what the Auditor General had to say on this very issue. In 2007 the Auditor General looked at Ontario's sex registry program. On page 272 of this report he notes, "Even though sex offender registries have existed for many years and can consume significant public resources, we found surprisingly little evidence that demonstrates their effectiveness in actually reducing sexual crimes or helping investigators solve them, and few attempts to demonstrate such effectiveness."

I think this is important because this is what this bill is attempting to do. As you have heard from the member from Parkdale–High Park, as I heard yesterday in debate as well, more than 40% of victims are dead within an hour and 91% are dead within 24 hours unless the police can find them. We need to give every single tool available to police officers to try to find predominantly children but also women before they are dead. If that tramples on a few sensibilities, then indeed it must do so. I think that when this goes to committee, all of us need to take a deep hard look in our souls to determine whether or not we are going to give the kind of tools that are necessary, including expansion to include young offenders who have committed violent sexual crimes in the past, so that the police have every opportunity to save a life.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to rise because it gives me an opportunity to speak not only about the sex offender registry but about something far more important, I think, in terms of the safety of our children, and that is what we could be doing in this Legislature in terms of prevention of sexual abuse of our children.

In my riding I've had two instances which were horrific. One, we all recall Katelynn Sampson, the little girl who was found. Even seasoned police officers were horrified by the scene when they found her. She was looked after by so-called guardians. Again, there was a move to tighten up the system of guardianship around that.

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Particularly to those of us who knew her mother—and we know her mother, Bernice—and to others in the community who knew this little girl, and to the principals and teachers and students in her school who were all traumatized by this, what was critical is to say: What could have been done to prevent it? In a sense, when you've gone an hour or 24 hours, even with a sex registry to find the perpetrator, that's not the answer; it can never really be the answer. We need to do more to prevent it from happening in the first place.

With Katelynn's death, there were steps that could have been taken. There were problems we could have addressed that might have resulted in that little girl being alive. One of the ways in which we could have prevented that death was to actually have a fully funded public school system. That sounds strange. But here's why: The principal, who was often blamed by the media and reporters—"Here was a little girl absent from school for many months. Didn't you do anything?"—said to me, "We did all that was within our tool kit to do. We phoned. We were told that she was back home on the reservation—she was a First Nations child. We phoned and were told that she was with legal guardians in another jurisdiction. We couldn't do more than that. We don't have the resources to do more than that, even if we suspect."

There was a day, if we remember, when there were truancy officers. There was a day when social workers would be sent out to investigate. They didn't have those resources. They don't have those funds. Those jobs have been cut out of our public school system. That's sad. That's prevention.

On the order paper, we have Holly's law. Holly's law, to put it simply, is something that has been asked for by Maria Jones—again, a very well-publicized case.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment. I'd ask the members to either pay attention to what is being said in the chamber or take their conversations outside.

You may continue.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's sad when we don't want to focus on an issue of such import.

Maria Jones is a phenomenal woman. Again, a horrific crime, if we remember the death of Holly Jones, a death that in many ways could—perhaps the police could have been helped by a sex registry; perhaps not. What has she done in the aftermath of this horror? She has become extremely proactive about preventing child sexual abuse. She knows, and so do her supporters—I count myself as

one of them—that the vast majority of child sexual abuse does not happen by a stranger. It's not stranger danger; it happens in the home by people the child knows, so, to address that, she has asked that teachers have materials available in the classroom that would help them help children disclose what's happening in their lives. There are phenomenal programs—I can think of one obvious system called Boost, but there are others—to make those materials available to teachers. We've talked to teachers' unions, and we've now, through the Ministry of Education, made those materials available. Certainly, if anybody is watching who has any chance of speaking to teachers or school boards, please recommend that they look at these materials. They are now available. We worked and Maria Jones worked to get them available for teachers. Use them, because they will allow children to actually talk about what's happening in their lives. That's what teachers need to be able to intervene and to find out. Again, this is a survivor of a horror who has tried to do something to prevent another child from being hurt. Let's use those materials and let's promote them.

I also want to thank many in my riding and across the province of Ontario who take part in circles of support. For those who don't know what circles of support are, they were started by the Mennonites, people who have worked in other areas of disease and war to bring about change. Here they're working around sexual abuse. The Mennonite circles of support are set up for those abusers who have served their full time and are released. What they do—it's voluntary; the abuser has to agree to be part of it—is gather a group of volunteers who literally monitor this person. Again, it's voluntary, but the work is profound. They monitor the person, and the person meets with the circle of support. They assist with housing and job creation, but most importantly, monitor them. Day in, day out, these meetings are required. Again, kudos to the Mennonite circles of support. For those who have them in their ridings or don't know if they have them in their ridings, find out. Because if you do, you'll discover a group of amazing people who are doing profound work and, again, preventing the horrors from happening, preventing abuse from happening.

To get back to the sex registry, though, you've heard my colleague from Beaches–East York talk about the oversight of the 17½-year-old who might be an offender. There's also the oversight of those who aren't on the registry; that's a concern for New Democrats. Those who don't voluntarily come forward and put themselves on the registry are classically the ones most likely to re-offend. So we need to close that loophole; we need to make sure that all of those who have been convicted at any time of sexual abuse be on that registry.

We also need to do studies around the efficacy of the sex registry, because to my understanding, to my knowledge, those studies have not been done. Are they working? We've heard some evidence that they seem not to be working. Why aren't they working and how can we make them work better?

One of the obvious ways—and certainly when you talk to members of the circles of support, people like Maria Jones or the mother of Katelynn Sampson, they're quite horrified to discover there's not a kind of specific information included in the sex registry. That is to say, what was this person convicted of? What is their proclivity? Are they pedophiles? Is it young boys that are at risk when this person is out? Is it young girls? What really is the situation with this person? Again, when you're thinking of that critical 24-hour period when a child goes missing who's abducted, children like Christopher Stephenson who inspired this bill and others, we heard that within the first hour almost half of them are dead. Within 24 hours, 91% of them are dead. It's a critical period.

So if the sex registry is going to help our police—and God bless our police. Imagine being a police person who's in that situation with the pressure on, knowing that you've got at most a day to save the life of a child. Imagine being that officer. We want to be able to provide that officer with as many tools as possible, and if the sex registry is just a compilation of names without detailed information that can help them truly identify a possible perpetrator, then maybe it's not as useful as it should be. Again, how can we strengthen this?

My colleague here just passed me something to say that sex registries are not new. No, they're not. In fact, anybody who's interested in LGBT rights should know that in the 1940s in California the sex registries were used to target homosexual persons. This moniker followed them throughout their lives until the cultural climate and the laws changed around the issue of homosexuality. So they don't have a particularly auspicious beginning in North America. That's something that one might want to look at as well.

Ultimately, what we should be about, and I believe what we all are about, is the protection of our children. There, the sex registry is only a small component part. It's an important one, it's one that we think should be strengthened, but it's not the be-all and end-all. What we need to be looking at are the prevention angles, to prevent what is the most common form of child sexual abuse, which is that which happens in the home.

Again, kudos to Maria Jones. Kudos to the Mennonite circles of support, who do what they can. Kudos to those who have been supportive of Bernice Sampson, whom I see regularly these days, and to all of those who suffered the death of Katelynn Sampson in my riding and who call on the government to put the money back into public education that needs to be there to protect children in the future, to follow up on children who go missing, to knock on the doors of children's homes where they suspect a problem lies. That's what we need.

Let's face it: If we had more child care in the province, that's a first line of support for children who may be at risk. These are adults whose other eyes on children at risk might help prevent a tragedy.

So let's look at prevention; let's strengthen the loopholes in this act itself, which I'm sure we will do at com-

mittee through the able person of our justice critic from Welland; and let's certainly make ourselves individually aware of what's happening in our own ridings in terms of what we can do as representatives to protect our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

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Mr. David Zimmer: I did want to address a question that has come up, and that is, why will the public not have direct access to the registry? The policy position there is that first of all, in Ontario, we've got one of the highest compliance rates among the jurisdictions that have this kind of legislation; it's 97%. Secondly, the police and the investigating authorities have immediate access to the registry.

The best advice that we get from people who are following these issues is that if the public has direct access to the registry, it does create, in the minds of the people who should be registering in the registry—the sex offenders—a fear that they will be, if you will, targeted on the streets or subject to vigilantism and so on. There is some evidence in other jurisdictions that indeed this is the case. The further evidence is that if the person who should register knows that the only people who have access to that registry are the police and investigating officials, they're more likely to voluntarily comply. That certainly has been the experience here in Ontario, where the compliance rate is 97%. If the idea is to get these people into the registry, we do not want to do anything to incent them not to register because it's that information in the registry that provides the investigating tool. On balance—you have to balance these options—it's more effective to allow only the investigating authorities and police to have access to the registry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Parkdale–High Park this morning has made an informed comment with respect to two bills, this being the second one. It's a positive reflection. I think back to when I was here with many other members who were here in 2000, when Christopher's Law was passed. It's important to recall the members who are no longer here—the great work they did. David Tsubouchi was one of those people. I say, thank you, David. I also say thanks to David Young, who was Attorney General, I think, and Jim Flaherty, at the time.

This was a very important act at that time. It's a compliment from the member from Willowdale admitting that it was very well developed and designed. A compliance rate at 97% is something to be proud of for Ontario.

I think imitation is the finest form of flattery that is possible. In this case, Premier McGuinty is just updating the existing bill to be in compliance with the federal legislation, Bill S-2, I believe it is. It's good news.

As far as I'm concerned, the member from Parkdale–High Park, who works, I think, often with persons who are potential victims or at least in the community as a minister of religion, would certainly be a good person for them to go to.

It's a good time to reflect on a good piece of legislation. I think it certainly will have public hearings to make sure it's in order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was very pleased to see both the members for Beaches–East York and Parkdale–High Park participate in this important debate.

The member from Parkdale–High Park spoke about a very important service that's conducted. She spoke about the Mennonite community monitoring sex offenders who have completed their prison sentences. One of the things that we talked about yesterday is that at the end of the day, most sex offenders are going to be back in the community. Most sex offenders receive sentences that are served either at the provincial institution—two years less a day—or in the lower ranges of federal terms—two years plus. The problem is that once that person has finished his or her sentence, they are suffering from a condition that has probably not been adequately treated in the institution, and then they're thrust back into the community. They don't have any parole obligations if they have finished their sentence because parole, of course, is part of a sentence. There's nobody to assist them, assuming that they have a commitment to avoid offending again and not offending.

I think it's an incredibly important activity. It's the sort of activity, along with a lot of other post-sentence aids and supports, that has been abandoned in the province of Ontario, first during the course of the mid-1990s and through to the present time. We've gutted our jails of corrections. There is no correction in correctional services anymore. We've turned them into warehouses. All we do, then, is make criminals better criminals and angrier criminals when they're released and more dangerous criminals. We've abandoned all the supports that can be useful at a post-sentence point.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing a different perspective, a different view, for the debate taking place in this place.

The sex offender act: This issue is incredible for all of us across the province of Ontario, especially when you have people leaving jail and going back to the community, as the member from Welland mentioned. Sadly, not very often do we have mechanisms to deal with them in the community. A priest, or people like the member from Parkdale–High Park, take charge and try to counsel those people and try to do their best to try to fit them back into the community, because it's a big, huge transition.

But the most important thing in this bill, as has been mentioned by my colleague the PA for the minister, is to make sure that our laws in Ontario align with the laws of the federal government. That's the aim of this bill: to

make sure all the laws that are being passed by the federal government are respected at the provincial level, even though we have, in the province of Ontario, a strong sex registry act, which has a lot of tools and strength in it and allows the police from different jurisdictions across the province to have access to the offenders across Ontario, to have more pictures, more details and more information about them, unlike the federal laws.

But in the end, as has been said in this place many, many different times, we have to work in conjunction with the federal authorities, especially through the OPP we have in the province of Ontario, to make sure all the sex offenders are located and under the microscope of the authority in the province—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, let's say right off the top that of course we're going to work to strengthen this bill and to see that every possible loophole is closed.

Having said that, what I hoped to bring into the discussion was yet another discussion which I believe is an incredibly important one, and that is: What else can we do? As the member from Welland pointed out, one of the things we can do is to make sure that those sex offenders who are released from prison are still monitored and to support those groups that do the monitoring. Right now, they do it out of a sense of love and responsibility to the communities, but they need our assistance to continue that extremely important work. That's really where we're helping prevent more incidents of abuse, and they are, in fact, as efficacious as, if not more efficacious than, a sex registry. We need to be looking at resources that we put into after-incarceration monitoring, particularly in the instance of child sex abuse.

We also need to look at the proper funding of our public school system so that there are what used to be call truancy officers, the social workers who can follow up with children at risk. We need that. We don't have that now. Teachers are often put in an incredibly horrible situation when they know there are bad home situations that they're sending the children back to, yet they don't have the resources to really bring to bear to prevent anything horrible from happening. These are ways in which we can prevent the tragedies from occurring. These are all actions that this House should take.

That was what I wanted to bring to the table, and also to really give kudos to Maria Jones, Bernice Sampson and all of those who, in my riding, have worked around and through such hideous tragedies and turned them into modest triumphs in terms of the work they do for our communities.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being past a quarter after 10, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1019 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to introduce my nephew Richard Neville, who's a councillor in the township of North Stormont. I'd like to welcome him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and page Gemma Ricker, to welcome her mother, May Lynne; her father, Brian; sister Bethany; and sister Silken. Welcome to the Ricker family.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery, from my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome back to the Legislature Kirk Perrin. Kirk is visiting Queen's Park today with some of his fellow brothers from the Delta Upsilon Fraternity, University of Guelph chapter, including Paul Collins and Ryan Sellars. Gentlemen, welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. My understanding was, he is going to be here today.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you.

Premier McGuinty has a spending problem. In seven years, the McGuinty government increased spending by 70% even though the provincial economy grew by less than 10%. Premier, you're hardwired to tax and spend. Why do you think Ontario families will believe you've changed from the tax-and-spend Premier they know you to be?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the unique perspective brought by my colleague and the party that she represents. There's no doubt about it: There is a different set of choices when it comes to dealing with the deficit that we have rightfully acquired, I would argue, based on the supports we've provided to Ontarians either directly or to our businesses at the time of a terrible economic recession.

We won't do as my colleague opposite advises. We will not be shutting down hospitals. We will not be laying off nurses. We will not be shutting down full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. We will not be hacking and slashing social assistance. We won't be getting rid of the Ontario child benefit. We won't do those kinds of things. We reject that approach.

We'll proceed thoughtfully and responsibly. In keeping with the values of the people of Ontario, we will protect health care, we'll protect education and we'll grow this economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario PCs also don't believe in making families pay and pay and pay. You're running massive deficits that are causing our children and our grandchildren's families to pay for your spending.

Last year, you broke Bob Rae's record with a $19.3-billion deficit. This year, you're patting yourselves on the back that you have a $17-billion deficit, more money than you brought in in revenue.

Why would Ontario families believe you will deal with your spending problem now when huge deficits didn't shame you into changing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's hard to figure out from day to day where the Conservatives stand on these kinds of issues, and I'll give you a specific example. My honourable colleague opposite, the member putting the question to me, was part of a select committee on mental health. There was no dissenting opinion from that committee, as I recall that report, and one of the recommendations is that we invest further in mental health in the province of Ontario. Is my colleague opposite telling me now that she's distancing herself from that report, that she's no longer prepared to stand by that report, that we should not invest in mental health in the province of Ontario? I'm asking that question. I think—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

I just remind the members of the motto of this chamber; it is, "Hear the other side."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): When the member from Sarnia–Lambton interjects, it's very difficult to hear the other side or for the other side to hear the Speaker commenting.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not helpful from the Minister of Community Safety as well.

I recognize that there is something very important happening today, and many people are excited by what is taking place. But we do have a job to do, and this current job to do is question period. I would just remind all members to be respectful of one another.

Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is about priorities and spending. Premier, your record-setting deficits are piling up the provincial debt. Premier McGuinty is doubling Ontario's debt. In just eight years, he spent so much that he matched Ontario's debt from Confederation to the time he took office. It takes a special kind of spending problem to double the debt in such a short time.

Why would Ontario families trust you to tackle your spending problem when not even doubling the debt has shamed you into changing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No doubt about it: We're bringing a decidedly and markedly different approach to dealing with these kinds of issues. For one thing, we're going to present the budget in this chamber. Secondly, there will be no hidden deficits; we're very up front with the people of Ontario. Thirdly, we will not hack and slash. We will not shut down our hospitals; we will not lay off nurses.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford, the member from Simcoe–Grey and the member from Simcoe North, please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If we just dwell for a moment on one of the solemn commitments made by my colleagues opposite—that is to take $3 billion out of health care—I think people need to understand the consequences of that. What it means—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I heard a number of unparliamentary comments. I can't attribute them to any one individual. I just remind individuals of the use of proper parliamentary language in this chamber.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Or if they prefer, if you reduce the HST by 1%, that's like taking $3 billion out of health care.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A warning to the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A warning to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A warning to the member from Oxford.

New question.

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My next question is also for the Premier. Trusting Premier McGuinty to control spending is like trusting Michael Ignatieff not to form a coalition. Even when you say you won't raise taxes, you raise taxes. Take the time during the 2003 election when you signed an oath not to raise taxes. After the election, you brought in a health tax.

Why would Ontario families trust you when you say you won't raise taxes now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If my honourable colleague is looking for my—not so much permission, but if she's looking for leave of this House to go somewhere canvassing, she has that. I just want to make that clear. She doesn't have to stay in here.

But just to remind her, we are, in this House, responsible for the delivery of good-quality health care to Ontario families; for the delivery of good-quality, publicly funded education; for the protection of our natural environment; and for doing whatever we can to work with our private sector partners to engender growth and new jobs as part of a vibrant economy. That's our responsibility. I want to remind my honourable colleague opposite about that.

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The good news is that we have now recaptured 91% of the jobs that we lost since the height of the recession. That tells me one thing: We're moving in the right direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier, even when you say you won't raise taxes, you do. In the last days of the 2007 election campaign, you said you wouldn't raise taxes. After the election, you raised the HST and used your greedy tax grab as coverage to sneak eco taxes past families. Now McGuinty Liberals are openly musing about new taxes on water and carbon and an eco tax on cars.

Why would Ontario families believe you won't raise taxes when even McGuinty Liberals know that you will?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On the matter of the HST, I want to again take the opportunity to commend Minister Flaherty for his unwavering support in this regard. If it was not for the support of the Conservatives in Ontario, we could not possibly have moved ahead with the HST. It is a difficult step forward, but is absolutely essential.

We've learned that it is already having the intended effect. Businesses are making new levels of investments in equipment and productivity-enhancing technologies. We're talking about 600,000 new jobs over the course of 10 years. A difficult decision to make, but again, without the support of that party we simply could not have gone there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario families simply don't believe Premier McGuinty any longer. The first time you swore to Ontario families you wouldn't raise taxes and then did, shame on you. The second time you said you wouldn't raise taxes and then did, shame on me. But if we believe you when you say for a third time that you won't raise taxes, then shame on all of us. You won't change, so it's time for a change. Why is it that the only way Ontario families will see real change is to elect a PC government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: More than anybody else in this Legislature, I would argue, I'm looking forward to Ontarians gaining a better understanding of the stark contrast between the views of the future represented by that party and our party. They will pander to fear. They will exploit concerns about the economy and those kinds of things. We're the party of hope and opportunity.

The fact of the matter is, our plan is working. We have recaptured 91% of the jobs that we have lost. We now have the shortest wait times in the country when it comes to health care. Some 94% of Ontarians now have a family doctor. Our students are now performing among the top 10 globally when it comes to standardized testing. We're putting 60,000 more spaces in our colleges and universities, and we're going to move forward in a number of other directions through this budget at the same time as we grow this economy.

HEALTH CARE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Across the province, I hear from Ontarians who are frustrated with our health care system. Whether it's people having difficulty accessing primary care being told by hospitals to pay up to $1,800 a day for a bed or the long waits for long-term care and home care, Ontarians are frustrated. They are losing confidence that our health care system will be there when they need it. Can the Premier tell us if his government has a plan to fix the problems in the Ontario health care system?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I welcome the question from my honourable colleague. I am much less pessimistic, both in terms of my assessment of where we find ourselves today and our opportunities for tomorrow. I want to remind my honourable colleague that we will not be taking the approach that they brought in NDP Manitoba, where they closed some 50 hospitals. That's not an approach we intend to take here in Ontario.

The fact of the matter is, we have made significant, measurable progress. There have been real, substantive steps forward. I think we have 11,000 more nurses and 2,900 more doctors. We have 200 family health teams treating 2.3 million patients. We have the first nurse practitioner-led clinics in all of North America and, according to an objective assessment, we now have the shortest wait times in Canada. To me, that represents progress.

Is there more work to do? Always, and we look forward to doing it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: The reality is that over 20% of all hospital beds are designated as alternate level of care. Hospitals are forced to work with over 100% capacity, and there is no concrete plan for seniors' care in Ontario. In fact, seniors are often stuck languishing in hospital beds because of inadequate long-term care and inadequate home care services. This causes ripple effects throughout the entire health care system.

Will the Premier tell us if his government has a plan to improve home care and long-term care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague is well aware of the plans that we have in place in this regard.

I just want to raise an issue which I think is worthy of mention. At some point in time, I'm hoping that my colleagues in the NDP are going to begin to put a few questions to those who sit to their immediate right. Are they not concerned about the removal of $3 billion from our health care system? Are they not concerned about what that party would do to social assistance rates in the province of Ontario? Are they not concerned about the loss of full-day kindergarten that would be imposed by that party? Are they not concerned about the removal of the Ontario child benefit, which is helping 1.3 million children who are growing up in poverty in the province of Ontario? Are they not concerned about those issues?

Because I would argue that those would concern NDP supporters.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

M^me^ France Gélinas: I do have some concerns, but they're not the ones that he just listed. The concern that I do have is that this government has been in place for eight years and they're not ready to hunker down and fix the real problems. What happened? Our health care system and the people of Ontario continue to suffer.

Not only do we have hospitals over capacity; we have jammed emergency departments throughout Ontario. Not only do we have inadequate long-term care and home care services; we have contracted them out to the lowest bidder. We have grossly starved our community services.

The Premier may talk a good game and want to send arrows to my colleagues to the right, but through his actions, he shows that he is not able and willing to act. Can the Premier tell us if Ontarians can expect anything of substance in today's budget so that we see real improvement in our health care system, and not tinkering at the edges?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate the perspective put forward by my honourable colleague, but I just don't share her negativity and her pessimism. I think we've made some real, substantive progress with respect to health care.

I can say, first of all, that at a minimum we will do something that that party to her right would not do: We will protect the gains that we've made in health care and education. Notwithstanding the fiscal challenges that characterize our day, we will find a way to make more progress in health care for Ontario families.

DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, Brett Clarkson from the Niagara Falls Review did an interview with your appointee, Mr. Ritter, last week, and in this particular interview, he said that, "Ritter also stressed that the panel is not investigating Agent Orange." He quotes Mr. Ritter as saying, "The charge to this panel from the minister is quite clear.... We are to look at 2,4,5-T, and that's not Agent Orange."

Can you tell us what the heck is going on?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to speak about this issue again, and I want to reiterate how very concerned we are about this issue and how committed we are to sharing the facts and the information in a very transparent fashion.

As I've stated before in this House, this government is doing something very unusual: We are actually leading the charge on the use of 2,4,5-T that was used in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and possibly the 1980s. We continue to ask our federal partners to work with Dr. Ritter and his independent panel to ensure that we all have the information that we need, whether it's in Niagara Falls or anywhere else in Ontario.

The federal government, through Health Canada, regulated the use of herbicides in this country. This particular herbicide was registered by the pesticides directorate of Agriculture Canada, the federal department responsible for registering pesticides. The people in Ontario are depending upon us to conduct an independent investigation, and that's what we plan to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back to the minister. People in this province are concerned that the province of Ontario, through different agencies and ministries, used Agent Orange. You've got the person that's leading the charge in the investigation saying, "Oh, no. We're only looking at half of it. We're not going to look at 2,4-D; we're only looking at 2,4,5-T." The two chemicals are the mix that makes Agent Orange. That's what people have been exposed to.

So I ask you yet again: Why is your appointee all of a sudden saying that he's not going to investigate the use of Agent Orange and only half of what was inside that mix?

1050

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: This government understands that there need to be some tough questions asked. We know that Dr. Ritter has the expertise to ensure that this issue receives the full attention that it deserves. We asked him to chair the panel, and he's going to be selecting panellists who will help inform the decisions that he makes. We have fulfilled our commitment to set up that independent panel.

I trust that Dr. Ritter will use the kinds of individuals that he needs to help inform that decision. He's going to be supported by panel members who will serve on a part-time basis. They'll be selected upon their expertise available. That independent panel will be submitting that report to this government, and we will be making those details available to people across Ontario.

I know that, based on the letters and the phone calls we've received, there are many individuals across Ontario who have concerns about their health. We want to make sure all those answers are available. We know how important it is to people across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back to the minister: Let me surmise why I think that he's not looking at Agent Orange.

Dr. Ritter is on the record as one of the experts who for years has been saying that 2,4-D is not harmful to human health. Therefore, he doesn't want to look at Agent Orange because we know what he himself has already pronounced when it comes to one half of the mix, being 2,4-D.

My question back to you is: Why would you put somebody in charge of an independent investigation on the use of Agent Orange if we clearly know that this individual has actually pronounced, a number of times, on 2,4-D, which is half of the mix of Agent Orange? Isn't this about you limiting your liability and ensuring that you don't get the kind of information back that people can go back and get compensation for?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I think the member opposite has spent an inordinate amount of time focusing on whether the panel was independent at the beginning and now is trying to dismiss the credentials of someone I feel is very well qualified to lead this committee. To discredit this individual I think is unhelpful, particularly when people across Ontario expect us to do an independent investigation. We've worked very hard to make sure that we posted the information, that we've contacted someone like the chief medical officer of health to help us with this.

We need to understand that MNR stopped using this herbicide back in 1979 and the federal government removed it from its herbicide registry back in 1985. We are committed to documenting the herbicide activities and where they were sprayed across Ontario, but we must recognize that there's a lot of information. There are a lot of questions—more than we have answers to. We are having difficulty locating all the information. This was in the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s. We're committed to getting all the facts. We know that the people of Ontario expect—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

BUDGET SECURITY

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Premier. How much did you spend on security for the budget this year, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's an interesting question—to some, I gather. I don't have that specific information, but I can say that we will do what is appropriate, what is reasonable and what is prudent in the circumstances. We can keep costs down, we found, by presenting the budget in this chamber. It's a lot more expensive if we take it off the premises and do it elsewhere.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Budget details have been leaking out like a sieve since Friday. In fact, Rob Benzie of the Toronto Star presented so much of the budget that he has a right to claim part of the salary of the Minister of Finance. Whatever you spent on security was a waste. Why did you bother?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleagues are very interested in the details of the budget and, shortly, as I say, we'll be presenting those in this very chamber. It'll be right here at 4 o'clock. I would encourage my honourable colleague to be here.

The budget will make it clear that we are bringing a thoughtful, balanced, responsible approach, which is inspired by the values shared by Ontario families. They want us to protect their health care, they want us to protect their education and they want us to protect the growth that is taking place in this economy. They also want us to protect their futures by finding a way to responsibly address the deficit over time. Those are exactly the values that will inform the budget to be presented here this afternoon.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Joan Moskowitz is a constituent of mine who worked for a social service agency. Last year, she was injured on the job and couldn't work. She expected to have Workplace Safety and Insurance Board coverage to support her while she recovered from her injury. To her shock, she found that her employer was exempt. There was no coverage, no support. She had great hardship holding together her household, her family. When are you going to act to ensure that Joan and workers like her are covered by WSIB?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I think everyone in this House would sympathize with the hardship that anyone would face if they get injured on the job or if they're unable to work. There are services available, as you well know, in Ontario. We have a universal health care system that provides assistance when anyone requires it. But in regard to those that are exempt from WSIB coverage, if that is the case that we have—it is a no-fault insurance that has been provided to safeguard those in construction in hazardous instances, and that's what we have with WSIB at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That was kind of an "I feel your pain" response but, you know, Ms. Moskowitz deserves more than that. Next month, the Arthurs hearing will commence into the coverage and funding of WSIB. You, Minister, can help Joan and millions of working people like her by putting the question of expanding WSIB coverage to all workers on the agenda. Will you help those workers, or will you ignore them?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The WSIB is responsible for being financially stable and accountable to some of those issues. We are looking and, as I mentioned, Harry Arthurs is performing a review of the WSIB as well as the unfunded liability, and they're taking a lot of things into consideration. We will continue to provide for that report. We'll see how they proceed and, from there, we'll make some decisions as to what we need to do going forward.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Attorney General. Today marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. For half a century now, the commission has played an important role in upholding Ontario's commitment to human rights.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, there are numerous individuals who work tirelessly every day to ensure that equality and fundamental rights are not only guaranteed but, in fact, are achieved for all. My constituents are proud to live in a province with a long tradition of leadership in promoting respect for human rights.

Although Ontarians can be proud of our achievements, our society is constantly changing. With this change comes new challenges and, in a province as diverse as Ontario, we must constantly be aware of potential threats to the commitment to equality that has been part of our collective identity.

Can the Attorney General tell us what is being done to ensure Ontario remains a leader in protecting and preserving our strong tradition of human rights?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Ontario does have a very strong tradition in protecting and defending human rights. The member from Ottawa Centre has spoken passionately about this system and our need to do so over the years.

Yesterday, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. There were members of the commission here in the Legislature to hear the statements of all.

It was a system set up as a result of the work of many, such as people like Hugh Burnett, who came back from the Second World War, having served his country in defence of freedom, who was working as a carpenter and then couldn't get served in a restaurant because of the colour of his skin. It was a system that was set up because of the work of people like him and others to protect and preserve human rights as the foundation for the society that Ontario is and wishes to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: We certainly have come a long way in a relatively short period of time when it comes to fighting injustice in our society. I've spoke often about my family coming to Ontario and Canada to ensure that we do continue to live in a free and open society.

Thankfully, protecting human rights is something that has been a commitment of all governments in this province over the past half-century. I know our government recognizes that in order for our system to effectively protect the rights of Ontarians, it must allow for claims to be dealt with quickly and fairly.

Can the Attorney General tell us, on this 50th anniversary of the commission, how our human rights system is now working to encourage respectful dialogue and to lay firm foundations for mutual respect in our province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: There's lots of commentary from across the aisle about whether this is new. No, it's not new. Ontario's defence of human rights has existed for decades, through all parties, and we want it to continue. Ontario's defence of human rights has consisted of rights that are outlined in a code and remedies for those who feel that they've been aggrieved or had those rights violated. You can't just have a statement of rights; you have to have rights and a remedy; otherwise, the rights can't be supported.

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We defend a system that has a Human Rights Commission that can deal with policy issues, has a code that outlines the rights, has a tribunal which people can access and a support centre for those who need legal assistance. We will not shy away from our defence of human rights in this province, today or in the future.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

New question.

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Jim Wilson: Clearly the Liberal leadership campaign has started over there.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, weeks ago we told you about problems with your broken victims-of-crime program and we told you what the solution is. You voted against our plan to release the surplus money to victims and said you needed to talk about the program some more. Now Donna Dixon of Hamilton has been told that she had to witness her son being kidnapped, shot, incinerated and put into bags of animal feed in order to be treated as a victim of crime. Premier, when will you stop talking about fixing your broken victims-of-crime program and actually fix it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Everyone in the House—and I know everyone in the province of Ontario—has sympathy and empathy for the family, for the mom, for this terrible tragedy.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You were passionate about the last question.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Premier has committed, I have committed and on this side of the House we have committed to make sure that we have the appropriate compensation for those who deserve it. We're now studying the options and we'll have an answer to this very soon.

The CICB has not yet, I understand, had an actual hearing on this case, and pre-hearing awards tend to be rather rare. But we'll make sure that we have the appropriate system to deal with all cases that should be dealt with.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: There's something wrong with a government that says you have to witness the murder of your child to get victim-of-crime supports.

There's no mystery to what the problem is or how to fix it. You were told what the problem was by the Ombudsman in 2006. You were told what the problem is and how to fix it by your own commissioner, the Honourable Roy McMurtry, in 2008. I say to the Premier: What

is your timeline to stop revictimizing Ontario families and fix your broken victims-of-crime program?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know what? What my friend's question doesn't mention is that we're spending about three times as much on issues relating to victims as the party opposite did. Where was the comment then? Where was the passion that he evidences when he was in power? It wasn't there.

What he fails to mention is that the commission into the CICB was to address many of the issues that had developed over the time they were in office. Where was the passion then? Where was the determination to fix?

What he failed to mention is that the wording of the CICB has existed for many years. Where was his passion then? Where was his determination to fix?

We've committed to fix and to continue to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: To the Minister of Health: On February 24 I asked this minister in this House to help my constituent Michelle Fernandes. Curative surgery exists for Michelle in the United States only. There is no physician in Ontario who can skilfully perform the surgery she so badly needs. Despite these facts, OHIP has denied her prior approval applications for full payment of insured out-of-country health services. The minister will remember that Michelle has been in constant agony and has exhausted her personal resources funding her multiple surgeries while she continues to wait for over five years for a hearing at the Health Services Appeal and Review Board in respect to OHIP's denial.

Why hasn't the minister been in touch with Ms. Fernandes when she promised to do so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member opposite for the question. I do not recall saying I would be personally in touch with the individual, and if I did, I apologize for that.

What I can tell you is that we work very hard to ensure that Ontarians have access to the best possible health care. Most often, that means they can get the care they need right here in Ontario. In fact, we are making increasing investments to ensure that Ontarians do get that care right here in Ontario, as close to home as possible. It is better for those individuals; it is also better for their families.

In very rare cases where we do not have the expertise here, then we do review the case and arrange for that person to go out of this country or out of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's quite obvious why the minister doesn't want to touch this. Significant changes to the funding of the OHIP out-of-country program will be made on April 1—this very Friday. One of the changes will make it virtually impossible for Michelle to have her appeal granted by the board. This change prevents an appeal from being granted by the board if an Ontario physician can perform the surgery within his or her scope of practice—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask our guests in the gallery that, as much as you may wish to participate in the proceedings, you can't. You just need to sit, not gesture, and just listen, please. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Michael Prue: —irrespective of whether or not he or she has actually ever performed the surgery before.

The minister has adversely affected Michelle's appeal and can be considered to be interfering with the administration of her appeal in the province of Ontario. Will this minister undertake that the changes will not prevent the board from granting Michelle's appeal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I look to the gallery, and I see that Ms. Fernandes is here, and I do now recall having had a conversation with her following question period. I apologize. I did not link the name to the face, but now I do that.

I want to say that my heart goes out to Ms. Fernandes. This is a very, very difficult situation. All I can say is, there is a process, and she is well aware of the process and going through that process. We will undertake to ensure that Ms. Fernandes and all Ontarians have access to the very best possible medical care.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Recently, the Canadian Institute for Health Information reported that Ontario is a national leader in wait times reduction for key procedures. The Wait Time Alliance and the Fraser Institute have also given Ontario's wait time strategy top marks.

Will the minister tell this House about the Ontario government's commitment to reducing wait times?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When we came to office, wait times for procedures were absolutely unacceptable. We have made getting those wait times down a very high priority for us, and we are pleased that that work is being recognized by many different organizations.

I would like to read from the CIHI report: "The proportion of patients who received knee replacement surgery within the recommended six-month wait ranged from 42% in Nova Scotia and 57% in Manitoba to 83% in Quebec and 89% in Ontario." We're the best in the country when it comes to knee replacement surgery. "For cataract surgery, 48% of patients in Alberta and 62% of patients in Saskatchewan received their surgery within the recommended 16 weeks, compared with 88% of patients in Ontario."

We have made remarkable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Minister, I appreciate the information you have provided. I know that the success of this government's wait time strategy is welcome news for Ontarians.

But what about our ERs? Minister, can you please inform this House what the government is doing to reduce the wait times in the emergency rooms in our hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks again to the member. Ontario is also the leading province in Canada when it comes to reporting ER wait times; in fact, we were the first province to measure ER wait times and to develop a strategy to bring them down. Our most recent data show that 83% of complex patients are treated within the eight-hour target; 87% of uncomplicated patients are treated within the four-hour target. Our goal is to get both of those to 90%.

1110

Ontario's success in reducing wait times in our key procedures and in the ER is a direct result of very strong collaboration between all our partners: our hospitals, our physicians, our local health integration networks, other health care professionals and the government. We are working hard to bring down wait times in emergency departments and we're also making investments outside hospitals—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Since my election, I've said that the South East LHIN is neglecting the health care needs of Leeds–Grenville. Now I have proof that they're not only neglecting us, but they're actively working to pull the plug on programs we do have by eliminating the surgical department at the Brockville General Hospital.

Minister, I'm outraged and disgusted that this option, contained in a consultant's report, is even being discussed. Minister, I'm asking you: Will you pick up the phone and call your unelected, unaccountable and largely anonymous LHIN and ask them to scrap this plan that will cut the heart out of Brockville General and our community—or are they carrying out your plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This question gives me an opportunity to talk about the value of the local health integration networks. It might come as news to the member opposite, but in fact local health integration networks, because they replace two layers of bureaucracy that existed when that party was in power, actually cost no more than what was in place before. What they do add is a local voice. The local planning that is happening in the community, community by community, to drive the change we must see in order to ensure that our health care system is responsive to the needs of the community is what they are doing, and they are doing a remarkably fine job.

I'm very proud of the work of the local health integration networks. They are driving integration and they are driving change. I want to take this opportunity to applaud the local health integration networks for their collaboration—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: This plan by your LHIN would be the death knell for an outstanding community hospital. Dr. Bill Redmond, the chief of surgery, was quoted in the news this weekend, saying that last year, Brockville General performed over 9,300 surgeries, and he admitted that they are still actively pursuing another general surgeon. Your LHIN's plan will make it impossible for us to attract new doctors and will leave our emergency department without essential surgical services.

The people of Leeds–Grenville won't sit back and let your LHIN gut our hospital, and neither will I. Minister, don't let the LHIN do your dirty work. Stop the doubletalk. Step out from behind your political cover and do the right thing. Will you assure residents of my riding that this plan will be scrapped and thrown in the trash can today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The LHIN is doing its work, and I think it would be appropriate if elected representatives actually took time to understand that.

But I tell you, the plan that I will not sit back and let happen in this province is the cut to health care that this party opposite did when they had the chance, when they were in power. They are committed to cutting health care. Let's not pretend that we can strengthen the hospital in Brockville if you're going to cut $3 billion out of health care. Cutting $3 billion means firing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member to speak about government policy, and I ask the member from Lanark to withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. If the Minister of Energy was listening yesterday, and I trust that he was, I reminded members of the importance of question period. An important component of question period is talking about government policy.

New question.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. The city of Hamilton has just received $8.5 million to reimburse it for the costs of administering the province's 2009 social service programs, a two-year delay to pay for the McGuinty Liberals' downloaded social service costs, which they have had six years to fix—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

I just remind the members that this is an important time of the day. This also, particularly on a budget day, gives a number of members an opportunity to talk about local issues. So often this question period is dominated by the leaders. One of the good things about budget day is, it does give backbench members an opportunity to ask questions that are important to their communities, and I

would just ask the honourable ministers to be respectful of those members.

Please continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: —a two-year delay to pay for the McGuinty Liberals' downloaded social service costs, which they have had seven years to fix. Will the province guarantee that the city of Hamilton will receive the reimbursement for 2011 social service costs immediately after the end of this year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the Premier for allowing me to answer this question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the importance of partnerships. It gives me the opportunity to talk about how important it is to get along with municipalities.

It speaks to the importance that this government placed in the opinions of municipalities when they said, "Enough with the downloading. We can't afford it any longer. Please provide us with some relief. Please provide us with the opportunity to be fair partners. Please start the uploading," and we did. We entered into an agreement with municipalities. We entered into an agreement with municipalities that was based on trust and respect.

We understand the significant challenges that municipalities faced under previous governments. We're doing something about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: They're doing something about it, all right. They're a little late with the money.

It's obvious that there are major flaws in a system that requires a municipality to administer the province's social service programs but requires the city to wait two years to receive the full cost of these programs. Is this Liberal government finally going to fix the real problem so that cities don't have an annual trek to Queen's Park, hat in hand, to plead for the real annual cost of these social service programs? Get with the program!

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I guess it's always good to compare. The leader of the third party says that New Democrats would inject more than $2 billion into municipal coffers over four years and will put Ontario on track to reverse the full provincial share of costs by 2015. That's what Andrea Horwath said: $2 billion over four years. That's only $500 million a year.

We provided an average of $2.2 billion to municipalities over the course of the last three years for infrastructure alone, because we listen to municipalities. Sophia Aggelonitis understands the importance of listening to municipalities. We will continue to do that because we know municipalities are equal partners in this type of a confederation of three levels of government. We only hope and wish the federal government would—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'd like to call the members to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final warning for the member from Peterborough. Final warning to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I just remind the honourable member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek that if he's not satisfied with an answer, there is a mechanism within the standing orders that allows him to do so.

New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, the first day of spring is already behind us, and we all know what spring means to the province's construction and road workers: It's construction season. In Guelph, we're looking forward to a busy construction season as workers finish up numerous infrastructure stimulus projects.

Minister, you have stood in this house and spoken at length about the good work your ministry is doing to ensure the safety of construction workers and all workers in Ontario. Can you tell this House what your ministry is doing to keep workers safe as they head into the 2011 construction season?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: As part of Safe at Work Ontario, the Ministry of Labour regularly conducts health and safety blitzes to help workers and employers correct workplace hazards before they occur. These blitzes are designed to raise awareness around sector-specific hazards and increase compliance with health and safety legislation. This May, our labour inspectors will conduct blitzes in the construction sector, including home builders and low-rise projects. Later in the season, inspectors will look at equipment, including ladders, suspended stages and elevated work platforms in the construction sector.

Blitzes are also planned for new and young workers, crane suppliers and tower cranes. As well, we will be looking at the mining and health care sectors.

Together with employers and workers, our team is working to develop a strong health and safety culture in Ontario's workplaces.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We know that most often, the incidents that lead to injury or death are preventable or avoidable if people take the proper precautions, but I still hear the opposition talking about our health and safety inspectors, saying that they're bad for business and just more red tape. Minister, can you tell us the kinds of results you've seen with past blitzes and more about the importance of health and safety inspections?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We all know what the opposition means when they talk about cutting red tape. By their very actions, that meant cutting the number of inspectors. The last time that happened, we had tainted meat scandals and the Walkerton water tragedy.

Since June 2008, we have conducted 25 blitzes that address specific hazards in a number of industries, and

our approach is working. The lost-time injury rate has decreased by more than 30% since 2003—that's 25,000 fewer lost-time injuries—and we're not stopping there.

As members of this House are aware, we've introduced a bill that, if passed, would appoint a new chief prevention officer and a council with representatives from labour, employers and safety experts. They will help the ministry to set new training standards, revamp the reprisal process and develop codes of practice that help businesses comply and protect workers.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, I spoke to your policy adviser this morning, just to indicate and give him some background on my question.

The Barrhaven and Riverside South communities of Nepean–Carleton are two of the fastest-growing communities in all of Ottawa, if not all of Canada. In Barrhaven alone, our population has risen to 52,000 from 2001 to 2006. It's nearly doubled, and it's expected to double again to over 100,000 within the next five years. That means there's been a demand on the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and the other three in my riding for more public education.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has reached its capacity at four of the seven schools in Barrhaven, and they've requested provincial assistance to build a new elementary school. I guess my question, Minister, is: Will you approve the funding request from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It is interesting; it is a spend question. The first question from the Conservatives this morning was, "Should we cut spending?" However, in the second half of question period, they have a different strategy.

What I can say to the honourable member is that we have worked with school boards across Ontario since coming to government to assist them to meet their capital needs. That is why this government has actually built 400 schools since 2003 in the province of Ontario. There are another 100 schools in the works. That is in stark contrast to what the previous government did when they closed 500 schools.

I believe we have a record. We do pay very close attention to the capital requests that come to us from school boards. We will be looking very carefully, obviously, in the Ottawa region; wonderful representation there—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's unfortunate. I did take the opportunity to contact the minister's office beforehand. This is important to my riding. It's important to parents and it's important to the students in my community. I thought I'd get better than a political response.

In 2008, I first brought to the attention of the previous Minister of Education, Ms. Kathleen Wynne, whom I was fortunate to be able to work with, the need for a new high school in the Riverside South community due to high growth in that community. The population in Riverside South is growing by 52% per year and the Steve MacLean elementary school right now needs to be expanded to accommodate the population pressures. High school students right now in that community are either being bused out of our neighbourhood or they are turning to the Ottawa Catholic School Board so that they can stay in their community.

Minister, my next question for Riverside South is: Will you commit to keeping up with the population pressures in Riverside South by expanding the Steve MacLean elementary school and building a new public high school in Riverside South?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, I would say to the honourable member that our commitment to build schools in the province of Ontario has been a priority. That will continue to be the case.

What I do know, though, is what parents in the riding of the honourable member are most interested to know about: For the year 2012, we have announced eight schools that will be getting full-day kindergarten.

Their commitment is not to move forward with that. That is what the people in the community are very concerned about. We listen to all of the people on all of the issues. Accommodation is a very important issue, as well as the commitment to full-day kindergarten. We are—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the member from Nepean–Carleton to withdraw the comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw calling her a liar.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question?

HEARN GENERATING STATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Energy: OPG has applied to demolish the historic Hearn generating station in my riding. Why did you allow them to apply for this demolition permit?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This question goes back some time ago. What I would say is that this particular facility is leased out. It's a long-term lease; I don't remember the exact number of years. The person who controls the site holds the lease and that entity has the right to do what they want to do with the site. It was something that was set a very long time ago. They're working, I understand, with the city through a process, but certainly, if the member wants an update as to where that process stands, I'd be more than happy to obtain that update for him and share it with him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: At least allow that the demolition was irresponsible. What will you, Minister, do to stop that demolition from going forward?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said before, the tenant or the person or the entity that holds the lease now has the right to do what they're doing, as far as we've been advised under the law, short of trying to somehow or another break the law or break the arrangements. I'm not really sure what the member would want me to do.

This lease wasn't signed when we were in power; it was signed under the previous government. The person who currently controls the property, the entity, has the right to do what they're doing according to the legal advice that we've received. If the member has information that is different from that, I'd be pleased if he would share that with me.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: A question to the Minister of Labour: Several months ago, I stood in this House and proposed Bill 114 to deal with people who are being literally ripped off in their places of employment. You were not the minister at that point, but can you tell us today—because we are getting letters every day, as you are: Are you going to do anything about this bill or are you going to let it die?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the member asking the question. I understand that the bill is trying to address tip-sharing and so forth in the restaurant business.

Nine out of 13 provinces do not have tips included in legislation. The Employment Standards Act provides civil protection for restaurant employees and anyone who believes they are being mistreated by their employer. They can contact us, as always.

I also would like to take this opportunity to speak to what we've done in regard to the notions and the issues around restaurants, and the minimum wage, particularly. We've increased it seven times over the last seven years consecutively. We will continue to do what's necessary, but that's been a 50% increase since we came to office.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member?

Mr. Michael Prue: As the minister should know, tips are not wages and therefore they are not covered by your ministry and they cannot be investigated by the very people you hire.

We have received a letter—and I know the minister received the same letter—from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business telling him exactly what he's supposed to do with this file; that is, he's supposed to kill it.

1130

Are you marching to the orders of the CFIB, or are you listening to the hundreds of thousands of servers who are having their tips taken off them? Which one is it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are doing what's important for the workers and the employees, and no one else. I'm disappointed that the member would make such accusations. He stands here and talks about situations that occurred in restaurants, when in fact it's untrue. I speak specifically to an issue out in Brock and so forth. What we know is that those employees want to have those jobs and they do have working relationships with their employers.

I say that we will continue to do what's necessary to stimulate economic growth, to ensure that those companies have the work necessary for those employees and that everyone gets the benefit of having that job.

In regard to tips, we are looking at your proposal. We'll see what takes place.

At this point, we are going to continue to take every step necessary to ensure the safety and the health of those employees.

TENANT PROTECTION

Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In Barrie, there has been some real discussion on the rights of tenants and landlords. Many of the constituents have questions regarding the Residential Tenancies Act and, more specifically, whether or not it has enough teeth to hold landlords accountable. I understand that the NDP plans to reintroduce a new version of the Tenant Protection Act, which would see a variety of changes to the current rules. I thought we already had one of the best tenant protection acts in place. Can the minister responsible clarify this for me so that I can get back to my constituents?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for Barrie for her advocacy and for her work, especially on this file.

The truth is that we have one of the strongest systems in place right here in Ontario. It balances the rights of tenants and landlords. We find it is very, very important to strike that balance. When we amended the Residential Tenancies Act in 2006, we brought forth a variety of changes that strengthened the overall system, that provided that balance. Our government brought forward stiffer fines for landlords who withheld vital services.

This government will continue to stand up for tenants. We will continue to understand the importance of striking that balance. We will ensure that there is fairness in a very, very complicated—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.: My constituents are going to be very happy indeed to hear about the government's commitments to their needs, but I still would like the minister to provide some more information.

As I mentioned in my earlier question, the NDP is introducing an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, specifically with respect to tenant protection. The bill claims that licensing landlords is the key to getting rid of bedbug infestations and a variety of other problems. Minister, is landlord licensing something that this government is considering?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Again, I thank the member from Barrie for the questions.

The simple answer is no. We are not considering licensing landlords because municipalities already have

the power. They have it under the Planning Act. They have it under the Municipal Act. They have it under the City of Toronto Act. Many have already utilized these tools to license landlords. Unlike the NDP, we believe that municipalities are capable of operating in their best interests.

I find it very, very strange that in the face of accepting the strongest legislation in place, they voted against our Residential Tendencies Act amendments in 2006. In doing so, they voted against the strongest regulations put in place, regulations that truly made a difference.

The reality is, we will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, from time to time, I have brought to your attention an ongoing fill operation in my riding of Durham, on the Oak Ridges moraine. As you are aware, you've done nothing so far. It began in the township of Scucog on Lakeridge with the company Earthworx flouting municipal bylaws. Mayor Mercier of the township was forced to get an injunction from the Superior Court to halt the dumping at the cost of the taxpayers. Now it appears that Earthworx has simply picked up shop and moved down the road to Morgans Road in Clarington.

The mayors of Clarington, Uxbridge and Scucog have all asked me to bring this to your attention, to do something to protect the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt. When will you take action to stop illegal dumping in the Oak Ridges moraine in Durham?

Hon. John Wilkinson: My question is, where has the member from Durham been? I can assure you that our ministry has been very active on this file. We have a number of director's orders on Earthworx. We're expecting them to comply, and they are. We've been on this file from before it was first raised to me by the member from Durham.

It is very important for people to understand that, in the province of Ontario, you are not allowed to take dirty fill and put it anywhere—specifically not in the Oak Ridges moraine and not into the greenbelt. It's very important that the good people in your riding understand that the Ministry of the Environment has been all over this issue. We will continue to make sure that the laws of the province of Ontario are upheld.

It is possible, of course, to have clean fill. We've been working very closely with the municipality, requiring testing to ensure that the Oak Ridges moraine is indeed protected, and it will continue to be protected by our government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. I congratulate the honourable members on the shorter questions: We were able to get 18 questions in today.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I beg your indulgence to allow me to make some comments on the standing orders. Specifically, we look at 23(j) and 23(i).

We understand that charging another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood is not allowed and, we accept, should not be allowed. It seems to be unclear on 23(i), "Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

I know we've had this discussion before, but I do beg your indulgence because, as you said, the climate here appears to be changing as we grow ever closer to an election here in the province of Ontario. You alluded to that point in dealing with some issues respecting elections in other jurisdictions as well.

It is becoming quite troublesome, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is for you as well, for, without any evidence to support the statements, the Premier, members of the cabinet and members on the opposite side—on the government side—continue to make statements impugning the policy of the Progressive Conservative Party and the opposition here in the House. They continue to make statements that are not supported in any way, shape or form with respect to what we are planning to do in health care. I'll say it: They continue to say that this party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I will encourage the honourable member to get to his point.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They continue to state that this party will remove $3 billion out of health care. It has never been stated by this party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the members to please come to order. I want to hear the honourable member.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It has never been stated by this party or our leader—not once. In fact, the only statement we have made on that subject is that we will protect the vital service of health care in this province. If they continue to make false statements about our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to provide guidance to all of us in this House concerning standing order 23. My reading of 23 is clear in that it states that the Speaker shall call to order any member who "makes allegations against another" or "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

1140

The Premier today, on a number of occasions, has very strongly stated facts—the way he positioned it. It is a fact, according to the Premier, that this party intends to cut $3 billion from the health care budget. Speaker, I would like to know from you—if that is not imputing false and unavowed motives, I don't know what is.

What I would ask you to do is to at least explain to us—having made that case very clear that that is not the intention and it is not the policy of the Progressive Conservative caucus or party—if that is not a false or unavowed motive, what is? And if that has been stated, will the Speaker agree to call any member in this House to order when they make that accusation?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member from Newmarket–Aurora for their comments regarding standing orders 23(i) and (j). I will remind the members on all sides that on a number of occasions, I have attempted to provide clarification on the issue of imputing motives within this House and I will ask the table to provide any member copies of previous statements that I have made regarding this issue to the members. They are available.

I do recognize that members do take exception to comments that get made from time to time. But as much as they may not like the comment that is made, it does not of itself constitute imputing motive. I remind the honourable members of that.

I think what we see regularly in this chamber is a disagreement between members. It is an issue that has been part of this chamber since time immemorial and my sense is it will be here for many years to come.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning the Brockville hospital. The matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Beaches–East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care regarding OHIP's out-of-country funding. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning funding rebates for social services to the city of Hamilton. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Education concerning new schools for Barrhaven and Riverside South. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

On March 8, Mr. Sousa moved second reading of Bill 160. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia
Albanese, Laura	Elliott, Christine	Murdoch, Bill
Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Hillier, Randy	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Best, Margarett	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Carroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	MacLeod, Lisa	Van Bommel, Maria
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Wilkinson, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Clark, Steve	Matthews, Deborah	Witmer, Elizabeth
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Yakabuski, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol	
Dombrowsky, Leona	Moridi, Reza	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Miller, Paul
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 73; the nays are 6.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 4 p.m. this afternoon. I remind the members that the bells will begin to ring at 3:55.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET
BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2011

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I move, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I remind the honourable members of the opposition that they will have their opportunity to respond to the budget.

I seek the indulgence of the House. Just before the pages start, please ensure that your aisles are clear for the pages and that all chairs are pulled in as well. I remind the honourable members that the 2010 budget was delivered in 25.54 seconds. The record is 20.35 seconds, so let's wish the pages well. Let the pages deliver the budgets, please.

Interjection: What was the time?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We'll leave everyone in suspense until the conclusion.

Have all members received a copy of their budget?

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present Ontario's 2011 budget.

Ontario is turning the corner to a better tomorrow.

L'Ontario remonte la pente vers un avenir meilleur.

Five consecutive quarters of growth, higher business investment and a resurgent manufacturing sector are all evidence that the global economic downturn is behind us.

Jobs and growth are returning to our economy as we embrace innovation and continue building the best education system in the world.

Strategic investments in education and health care lay the foundation for a future with more jobs, increased productivity and a better quality of life for all our families.

Mr. Speaker, this budget builds on our government's plan to return Ontario's finances to balance while protecting the gains that Ontarians have made together.

Our government believes that strong public services are essential to a strong economy.

Notre gouvernement estime que des services publics solides sont essentiels à une économie vigoureuse.

Good schools and hospitals strengthen the economy by making our people more productive and our businesses more competitive.

In turn, a strong economy creates jobs and supports education and health care.

Ultimately, this results in a better quality of life.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is how we, on this side of the House, measure progress.

That is why we have been working so diligently to build schools, hospitals and infrastructure.

One of our most important jobs is to ensure that Ontario businesses have the tools they need to build opportunities for people.

Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth is making businesses more competitive and is strengthening investment.

We cut the tax rate on new business investment in half, making Ontario a much more attractive place for businesses to invest and create jobs.

With our tax plan, a software publisher in Ontario will pay 58% less in provincial corporate and sales taxes.

For a restaurant, a small business, it's 67% less.

For a manufacturer in an economy that is growing again, it is 89%—leading North America.

This makes it easier to do business in Ontario.

Companies big and small are already responding by leading the country in new investments in equipment and technologies.

Investments by the private sector in buildings, machinery and equipment rose by 7.4% in 2010—almost a new record. It speaks to the commitment of our private sector partners in rebuilding our economy.

At the same time, research by economist Michael Smart finds that about two thirds of business savings from the harmonized sales tax had been passed through to consumers only six months after the implementation of our tax plan for jobs and growth—an important development for Ontario.

We have significantly decreased costs for employers, but there's more to do to ensure we become even more competitive.

Jobs are coming back to Ontario.

La création d'emplois reprend en Ontario.

So far, we have recovered 91% of the jobs lost during the global recession.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The opposition may laugh, but StatsCanada tells us that 84% are full-time, good-paying jobs. Shame on you for laughing at unemployment.

The United Kingdom has recovered less than 40% of the jobs lost during the recession while the United States has recovered less than 15%.

Ontario's plan for jobs and growth is working.

Le plan de l'Ontario pour stimuler la création d'emplois et la croissance fonctionne.

Gross domestic product rose by 2.8% in 2010, and all private sector forecasters expect sustained growth in the years ahead.

The average private sector forecast calls for Ontario economic growth of 2.6% in 2011 and 2.8% in 2012.

That means the economy is turning the corner.

Cela signifie que l'économie ontarienne remonte la pente.

To be prudent, our plans are based on growth assumptions below those of the private sector.

Therefore, we are projecting GDP growth of 2.4% in 2011 and 2.7% in 2012, which still means more jobs and a better economy for all Ontarians.

In our first five years as a government, we worked with Ontarians to repair and rebuild the province's neglected schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, roads and bridges.

We also eliminated the hidden $5.5-billion deficit that we inherited from those people across the aisle, and then we balanced three budgets in a row.

We did what was necessary to put our province on a stronger competitive footing and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please come to order. As I said earlier, and I'll repeat again—and I remind the honourable members of the motto of this place: "Hear the other side." I think we all want to have the opportunity to hear the other side. You will have your opportunity to respond in due time to the budget.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did what was—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Excuse me. I just made a comment asking the House to come to order. I didn't even have the opportunity to sit down, and you already started to interject. Once again I will remind you: You will have the opportunity to respond to the budget.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did what was necessary to put our province on a stronger competitive footing and create more opportunities for more Ontarians.

1610

As part of the global effort to stimulate the economy during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, our government, like those everywhere, ran a deficit.

We invested in infrastructure, we created and protected hundreds of thousands of jobs, and we took steps to make our economy more competitive.

Others would have slashed services which are essential to a growing economy.

We chose to protect education.

We chose to protect health care.

We chose to protect investments in infrastructure.

Others would have cut people loose.

But we chose to invest in people.

And we choose to preserve and safeguard our quality of life, and that is what's important to working Ontarians and Ontario families.

We have modernized Ontario's tax system.

We have rebuilt Ontario's run-down electricity system.

We have kick-started our clean energy sector, we have protected the auto sector, and we are implementing full-day learning for all kindergarten students in this great province of Ontario.

These investments and choices pay dividends to the people of Ontario.

Employment is up.

Manufacturing is up.

Business investment is up. The economy is better. More people are working and have a brighter future than they did even several months ago as a result of the situation in our economy.

Another major investment we made is paying dividends to our citizens.

Ontarians worked together to help their neighbours across the province who have jobs in the auto industry.

Together, we made emergency assistance of $4.8 billion available to General Motors and Chrysler to protect the hundreds of thousands of jobs in a key driver of Ontario's economy.

This year, auto production is up 40%, jobs have been protected, General Motors has paid back its loan, and the future is bright once again for the automotive sector here in Ontario.

This is an example of the kinds of choices Ontarians have been making.

Choices to protect and create jobs.

Choices to protect our water and food supplies.

Les choix faits pour protéger nos hôpitaux et nos écoles, qui nous sont si précieux.

So now, we're applying the same prudent, proven and responsible approach that saw us through the global recession to the challenge of the deficit.

Already, we have shown improvement from the deficit targets outlined for 2010-11 to 2012-13 in last year's budget.

In fact, deficits over these three years are projected to be $4.7 billion less than what we projected last year.

This year's budget is projecting a deficit of $16.7 billion for 2010-11, which is $3 billion lower than was projected last year.

For the people of Ontario, this means we are tackling the deficit challenge aggressively.

We will accelerate our plan to improve productivity and efficiency within the government, and we will help reform the public and broader public sectors over the long term.

We will make government more streamlined and responsive to the needs of citizens.

Looking ahead, we know there continue to be risks on the horizon.

We've been talking about these risks for some time.

They include the high price of oil, the US economy and the possibility that interest rates could rise sharply.

In recent weeks, the earthquake in Japan and political volatility in North Africa and the Middle East have created more uncertainty in the global economy.

A strong Canadian dollar poses real challenges for a number of sectors in our economy, and they are responding.

Ontario exporters are becoming more innovative, and merchandise exports rose by 16% last year, supported by an increase in total manufacturing sales of over 11% in 2010, and that in the face of a dollar that has now gone above par.

Opening Ontario to economic growth and jobs while protecting the progress we have made with our schools and health care requires a commitment to prudent fiscal management and balanced budgets.

Favoriser la croissance économique et la création d'emplois en Ontario tout en préservant les avancées réalisées par les Ontariennes et Ontariens dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la santé exige une gestion financière prudente et des budgets équilibrés.

Although the economy is recovering, Ontario cannot simply rely on economic growth alone to eliminate the deficit.

Our government has a strong track record of fiscal prudence and discipline.

In addition to posting three balanced budgets, we have overachieved our budget targets in five of the last seven years.

The expenditure management measures introduced in the last budget produced immediate dividends. Total expense is projected to be $3 billion lower than forecast a year ago, which demonstrates our commitment to keeping growth and spending down as we balance the budget and protect our education and health care systems.

This is the second year in a row that total expense has come in under projections.

We continue to look for ways to deliver services more efficiently and even more effectively for the people of Ontario.

The changes we have made add up to significant savings and service improvements.

This year's budget outlines nearly $1.5 billion in new savings over three years.

We are choosing to fight the deficit while protecting education and health care.

Nous choisissons de lutter contre le déficit tout en protégeant l'éducation et les soins de santé.

These two goals can be pursued at the same time.

Doing so requires balanced and thoughtful choices.

Cette option exige des choix équilibrés et judicieux.

This approach requires lower growth rates in other program expenses.

It will require us to re-examine the way programs and services are delivered to people.

There are other choices.

Choices we reject.

Choices such as a reduction in the HST, which would require deep cuts to health care, deep cuts to education, and would hurt Ontario families and undermine this province's competitiveness.

The choice could be made to slash benefits for our low-income people. They could let our infrastructure age or allow our universities and colleges to fall into disrepair—the same kinds of choices that were made in 1995.

Or you could lay off 33,000 teachers.

Or you could reduce the number of doctors in Ontario by 12,000.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean–Carleton, that is the second time today that you have used unparliamentary language. I ask that you withdraw the comments that you have made. If you say it again, you will be named.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I can't withdraw. He is a liar.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I name the member Lisa MacLeod, from Nepean–Carleton, and ask that you escort her from the chamber.

Ms. MacLeod was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable members to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew is inviting a warning himself.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the warnings that were issued this morning, please remember them.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Or you could eliminate funding for 37,000 nurses.

Or you could cut funding for 80% of all the beds in long-term-care homes.

Any one of those choices would save about $3 billion.

And $3 billion is about the same as a 1% cut in the HST.

We reject those choices and call upon other parties in this House to reject those choices as well.

We know from past experience that across-the-board cuts do not work.

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust that all the members are conscious of the fact that there are many viewers across the province right now. There are many individuals who are in this chamber. The nature of the decorum taking place right now does not reflect very well on all of us, and the sad part is that a minority of the members cause it and it reflects on this House as a whole.

For the third time, I will repeat, and I don't want to be up and down in the course of a budget: The loyal opposition and the third party will have time allocated to respond to the budget. Those points that they disagree with in the budget presentation from the Ministry of Finance—they will have the opportunity to make those

points. Let's be respectful. Allow the Minister of Finance to finish his budget speech.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Simcoe North.

Allow the finance minister to finish his speech. You will have the opportunity to talk to your local media, talk to the media and deliver your comments.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Lanark.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We choose, instead, what Ontarians would have us do: We choose to protect jobs, we choose to protect our vital public services, and we choose to protect our economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, just as people and families do, governments must live within their means.

Tout comme les familles et les particuliers, les gouvernements doivent vivre selon leurs moyens.

To help protect education and health care while also eliminating the deficit, we know that the status quo is not an option.

We will continue to reform the way government delivers services to people.

We will build on our track record of reform.

The 2011 budget identifies over 20 new initiatives to drive change and reform in public service delivery, including:

—instructing major agencies to deliver savings of $200 million by 2013–14;

—reducing the size of the Ontario public service by an additional 1,500 positions between April 2012 and March 2014. This comes on top of the reduction of about 3,400 positions by March 2012 that was announced in the 2009 budget;

—closing less efficient jails across Ontario and moving inmates to newer, more efficient jails to deliver better value to taxpayers and to keep our streets safer; and

—reducing funding for executives at hospitals and universities and other government agencies.

We will explore new ways to export and create value from Ontario's excellence in delivering those public services that are recognized as being the best in the world.

We will also look to determine whether the current ServiceOntario model delivers the best value and service to people.

In addition to these shorter-term initiatives, the government will establish the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, which would be chaired by Don Drummond. The commission will advise on more fundamental reforms: changes that will help protect health care and education over the long term, while accelerating the elimination of the deficit.

In my pre-budget consultations this year, I participated in telephone town halls—directly reaching out to more than 120,000 people across the province.

I heard from moms and dads who want to know that their kids have a bright future.

I heard from working people who want to know that jobs are being created—good, high-paying jobs.

I heard from seniors, who told me that they worked hard to ensure a better tomorrow for themselves, for their children and for their grandchildren.

They want to make sure that the savings are there for them when tomorrow becomes today.

People told me they want the governments they elect to give them the tools they need to prosper.

People told me they want the governments they elect to continue to improve the way they do business.

To reform the way they do things—essentially, to make government work even better.

Les gens m'ont dit souhaiter que les gouvernements élus continuent d'améliorer leur façon de se livrer à leurs activités.

De réformer leur façon de faire les choses – essentiellement, de faire encore mieux fonctionner le gouvernement.

Governments are elected to serve the needs of the people they are privileged to represent.

We—as a government—are motivated by the trust the people of Ontario have placed in us.

We are driven by our obligation and responsibility to deliver.

To build a better future, we must invest in each other—in people and in partnerships.

The McGuinty government will continue to partner with business to create the right conditions for jobs and growth.

Over the next several weeks, Ontario and several private sector partners will be announcing new investments of over $1.3 billion, including nearly $175 million from the province, creating more than 2,100 new jobs and retaining a further 7,800 jobs right here in Ontario.

We are taking steps to protect jobs on our farms.

Now, more than ever, Ontario needs a strong farming sector.

Volatility in commodity markets can make it difficult for farmers to manage their business risks.

I am pleased to announce the extension of the current risk management program for grain and oilseed farmers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government will also implement new risk management programs for the cattle, hog, sheep and veal sectors.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Durham. Member from Thornhill.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Timmins–James Bay.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's the second time, member.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to announce that we will also implement a self-directed risk management program for the edible horticulture sector; that is, the fruit and vegetable sector in our economy.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Peterborough.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The cost of these programs will be shared between the Ontario government and farmers.

Ontario strongly encourages the federal government to partner with both the province and farmers. I want to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for Ontario, who put all the effort into this to make it a reality. Unfortunately, the federal government kept saying no, and I hope people in rural Ontario will ask candidates of all political parties to do the right thing and stand up for Ontario's family farms; to build a better rural Ontario and a better future for all of our people.

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These programs are innovative.

Risk management programs provide bankability, stability and predictability for Ontario's farmers.

The McGuinty government will continue to invest in people and job creation.

Just as we modernized Ontario's tax system to help our businesses compete in the global economy, we cut personal income taxes and introduced a wide variety of tax credits and benefits that give money back to people.

With the changes we've made, people, on average, have more money in their pockets.

In fact, more than two thirds of households—those with incomes of $90,000 or less—have more money in their pockets.

With the changes we have made, 86% of senior households have more money in their pockets.

Working together, we are building a stronger Ontario for everyone.

An Ontario that cares for its people and its families.

An Ontario that helps businesses expand and create jobs.

An Ontario that is alive with opportunity for all who live here and are proud to call this great province home.

We are also helping Ontarians get further ahead through ongoing investments in post-secondary education.

Des experts affirment que 70 % des emplois de l'avenir exigeront une éducation postsecondaire.

So we want our workers to be the smartest, most capable and creative workers anywhere.

We want them to create the innovative products and services that the world wants to buy.

Ontario has a higher post-secondary attainment rate than any OECD country.

We want 70% of our people to go to college and university. It was only 56% in 2002.

Our commitment is that no keen and qualified Ontario student will be turned away for lack of space on our part or lack of money on his or her part.

There will be room, and there will be support.

That's why the 2011 budget announces additional funding that will create places for more than 60,000 additional college and university students by 2015–16.

Through one of the most generous student financial support programs in the country, we are also helping to keep education affordable.

We've known for a long time that a strong start in school makes for a strong finish.

Si nos enfants ont un bon départ, ils auront de meilleures chances de finir leurs études secondaires, d'obtenir un diplôme collégial ou universitaire, de suivre un programme d'apprentissage, de jouir d'une bonne qualité de vie et de contribuer à l'édification d'un Ontario plus fort.

That is why we chose to introduce full-day kindergarten last September.

It is the first program of its kind in North America.

This year, full-day kindergarten is available in nearly 600 schools for up to 35,000 children.

In September 2011, it will be available in an additional 200 schools, benefiting up to 50,000 children.

The program will be fully in place in September 2014, benefiting some 247,000 Ontario children.

Full-day kindergarten helps moms and dads too—saving them both time and money and making their own workdays easier and more productive.

Our government has chosen to strengthen our publicly funded education system—from kindergarten to graduate school—because we believe building education is more than sound social policy.

It is essential economic policy.

To compete with the best in the world and win, we also need a healthy workforce.

A strong, public health care system gives our workers and our businesses a real competitive advantage, which is why we chose to strengthen it.

Étant donné qu'un système de santé public vigoureux donne à nos travailleurs et à nos entreprises un avantage concurrentiel tangible, nous avons choisi de le renforcer.

We have built 13 new hospitals and five more are under construction.

We have added more than 10,000 more nurses.

And we have added close to 3,000 more doctors.

We have gone from zero to 200 family health teams, serving three million patients.

In another first for Canada, we now have nurse practitioner-led clinics.

Today, 94% of all Ontarians have a family doctor.

That is 1.2 million people more than were covered in 2003.

Hospital wait times are coming down. Ontario has the shortest wait times in Canada.

Together with Ontarians, we have chosen to build a strong public health care system that helps care for our families, improves our quality of life and increases our competitiveness.

We choose to keep protecting and improving our quality of life.

That's why the 2011 budget announces additional funding of $15 million over three years to provide 90,000 more breast cancer screening exams, expanding current screening to reach more women who are at high risk. I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his advocacy on this issue.

Mental health and addiction problems affect people during many stages of life.

One out of five Ontarians will experience some form of mental illness.

It touches all of our families.

We can and we will do more to help.

We are introducing a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy.

At the outset, our focus will be on children and youth.

By 2013-14, funding to support the strategy will grow to $93 million per year.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Last year members of an all-party committee worked together and tirelessly, hearing from people across the province about mental health. The committee's report is a great example of how all parties can work together to produce recommendations that led to today's meaningful results. I want to congratulate all members of the committee, members of the Conservative caucus, members of the NDP caucus and members of the Liberal caucus for their outstanding work.

Beginning in April, more pharmacy services and support will be available to people covered under the Ontario drug benefit program, including seniors.

That means more people will get the hands-on support and follow-up help they need.

We know that Ontarians want their federal and provincial governments to work together to improve health care.

They want us to focus relentlessly on improvements to our publicly funded health care system.

And they want us to ensure that Ottawa pays its share of our most important national program.

That is what Ontarians accomplished together when the last deal was signed in 2004.

So we will continue to ensure that Ontario is treated fairly when the health accord comes up for renewal later this year and early next year.

The choices that we have made to build a stronger economy and protect our vital services have been guided by the facts.

The fact is, our economy is growing.

Fait: les entreprises investissent et créent des emplois.

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The fact is, more and more people who lost their jobs during the recession are now finding work.

Ontario is turning the corner to a better tomorrow.

L'Ontario remonte la pente vers un avenir meilleur.

Our plan to help Ontarians through the recession and build for the future is working.

Those are the facts.

Now we need to face another fact confronting all governments—the reality of slower global economic growth and a deficit.

We need to move forward by making the same kinds of prudent, balanced choices we have made in the past.

So I am introducing a budget that supports job creation.

It will continue the necessary work we have already undertaken to eliminate the deficit.

At the same time, we choose to protect education.

We are choosing to protect our children's schools and make room for all four- and five-year-olds in full-day kindergarten. It is not a frill.

We will protect our economy and our workers by making room for the growing number of young Ontarians who are choosing a post-secondary education.

We will continue to build a strong health care system for our seniors, our young people and all of our families.

We will continue to make the same kinds of choices that Ontarians are making for themselves.

We will continue tackling the deficit while we protect the services that people rely on.

The world faces challenges here at home and around the globe. The people of Japan are showing resilience as they recover from that horrible tragedy.

Our armed forces who are serving around the world are showing their ability to overcome the challenges they confront every day.

Back here at home, the people of Ontario are pulling together as the province is turning the corner, and we will continue to build a stronger Ontario.

I am proud of the choices we are making and proud of our plan.

I know I speak for all of my colleagues on this side of the House when I say that we are more passionate about building that future today than we have ever been.

We are delivering a plan that leads to real progress, progress with a purpose, progress that offers a better tomorrow and a great future for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you very much.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I request that the House revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BETTER TOMORROW FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR DES LENDEMAINS MEILLEURS POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires de 2011, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On division, carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

I'd just like to take this opportunity to say, they almost did it. They were 0.25 seconds away: 20.6 seconds. Congratulations, though.

There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1645.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	

STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Peter Fonseca
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
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Elizabeth Witmer
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Gilles Bisson, Michael A. Brown
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Wednesday 30 March 2011

Mercredi 30 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION LABOUR DISPUTES RESOLUTION ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÈGLEMENT DES CONFLITS DE TRAVAIL À LA COMMISSION DE TRANSPORT DE TORONTO

Ms. Smith moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission / Projet de loi 150, Loi prévoyant le règlement des conflits de travail à la Commission de transport de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 150 today. The PC Party is supporting Bill 150. However, we have some strong reservations that came out during the committee meetings, and I'd like to share with the House our reservations and that process in the committees.

We know that this bill is an important bill for the people of Toronto, for the commuters of Toronto. It's been requested by the mayor and council of Toronto, and it's before us today for final reading. In our committees, we did offer up nine amendments to strengthen Bill 150, to improve Bill 150; nine amendments to protect Toronto taxpayers from potentially excessive increases, to provide greater clarity and criteria to arbitrators and also to provide this Legislature with an oversight role and review role on this legislation in five years' time, because it does provide for a ministerial review in five years.

It was quite disappointing to see that each and every one of those amendments was dismissed by the Liberal government—dismissed out of hand, I would say—with very little interest for discussion or debate on the justification and the merit of those nine amendments.

We know that this bill has its flaws. We know that the committee process is there to improve legislation, but it can only improve legislation if the people sitting on that committee come to that committee in good conscience, with goodwill and good faith, and that was not demonstrated by the Liberal members of that committee—not at all.

We know that there are those who are opposed to this bill. That was spoken to at the committee by delegates. One of them was Sid Ryan. Sid Ryan had some very critical things to say of this bill—very critical of some of the members on that committee as well for their actions. Sid Ryan, who of course heads up the OFL—the Ontario Federation of Labour—and CUPE, said to the member for Brant, "You play politics all the time, sir, with labour legislation and the lives of workers in this province, and it's got to stop."

He also went on to say that you helped out "the construction industry, because the construction industry puts money into your election machine, and you gave them card-based certification, but you said to the rest of the labour movement—you gave them the finger." Those are some of the quotes by Sid Ryan to our committee looking at this bill.

The first amendment that I want to talk about that completely disappointed me by the actions of the Liberal members was an amendment to provide a sunset review of this legislation in five years' time. The clause had two components that differ from the original bill. The first was that it would put a time frame to end that review, not just a time frame to start the review; and, secondly, it requested, or would have made into law if it had been passed, that the review would have been tabled in this Legislative Assembly.

A review tabled in the Legislative Assembly: That differs from the bill itself, the way it's written, in that presently that review only gets handed to the minister. The only one who will be able to see that review of this legislation in five years' time will be the minister himself or herself, and that really is diminishing the role and the responsibility and the obligations of the elected members of this province, the elected members who stand here and represent their constituents. All the members of this House who represent GTA ridings will not be able to look at that review. I believe that's a tremendous travesty of the due process and the protocols of an elected representative democracy. Reports reviewing our legislation must be tabled in this House so that we ourselves can take a look at them.

As I said to the members on the government benches in that committee, in five years' time we're not sure who's going to be sitting in this House. We're not sure

which minister is going to be sitting in that portfolio. Why are you so willing to diminish and abrogate your own responsibilities when you don't even know who's going to be in government, who's going to be the minister? It is due and proper that any review of our legislation be tabled in this House every time. It is absolutely unequivocal. It cannot be justified that we do business behind closed doors in this province. But that's what this bill is doing. It allows business to be done behind closed doors.

The members of the Liberal benches in that committee refused to take ownership of their own responsibilities, but more importantly, they seek to diminish the role of others in this House, which is unacceptable and intolerable, in my view.

We also put forward an amendment to provide some protection for Toronto taxpayers. We have seen, with essential services legislation, with arbitration, that arbitrators have very little regard for this concept of ability to pay when it comes to public sector union awards. Their ability to pay is often misconstrued by arbitrators into the ability to tax, which is, of course, near endless. So we brought forward an amendment that would have prevented excessive arbitration awards and protected Toronto taxpayers.

0910

But once again, the Liberal members of that committee dismissed that amendment out of hand, without discussion, without debate. It was as if they were completely disinterested in doing their job of representing their constituents and making sure that there is some value and some improvement in that committee process. It was just a completely dismissive approach.

Furthermore, we provided an amendment to provide greater clarity to arbitrators, to give them a greater understanding of the arbitration awards and the criteria that would be required to come up with a reasonable settlement. Once again, the Liberal members of this committee dismissed it out of hand.

We've seen this in the past, and it's something that we need to speak about in this Legislative Assembly. I've seen it in every committee that I've sat on, that any amendment brought forward by the opposition—this, of course, is the time. Committees are the time for opposition members to have input and influence and provide our constituents' perspectives on legislation. But in each and every committee that I've sat on, there has been no discussion, no debate from the Liberal government, on any amendment. It is always dismissed and rejected as if they, their bureaucracy and their policy staff are the only ones who have any authority or any expertise to provide comments. The rest of us in here, when it comes to this Liberal government, are unimportant, insignificant and indeed irrelevant to the parliamentary process. That is an abrogation of who we are and what our jobs are here.

I do believe that someday soon, the members of this House must stand up, find a backbone, defend their responsibilities and obligations, and defend and advocate for the interests of their constituents. But at the present time, and in my time here with this Liberal government, I've not seen any interest at all in making this assembly work better and in improving legislation.

Laughter.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see the member from Brant, who is laughing about this. Of course, he was the member that Sid Ryan was talking about in the committee. When Sid Ryan said, "You ought to be embarrassed; you ought to be ashamed," Sid Ryan was talking about the member from Brant, who sat on that committee.

Again, some people may think this is all just frivolous, unimportant, that this job, this privilege to represent people, is a laughing matter. That's not the way I see it, it's not the way my constituents see it and I don't believe it's the way the people of Ontario see our jobs here.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Not a lot of subways down in Brant.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I know there are probably not a lot of subways in Brant, and the member may laugh and chuckle about all this. There aren't any subways in Lanark county either, or Frontenac or Lennox and Addington. Regardless, we still take our job seriously. We still take the interests of our constituents and the taxpayers with deep interest and concern.

There are nine reasonable amendments. I have to give credit to the member on the Liberal side who was the Chair heading up the committee. He did say, "Thank you for the non-partisan amendment, but we're still not going to consider it. We're still not going to listen to it. It's non-partisan, but it came from you guys. It came from the opposition benches. It didn't come from our minister, so it really can't have any value now, can it?" Well, that level of arrogance, that level of disregard is going to be costly. It is costly to the people of this province when elected members have that cavalier approach and dismissive lack of interest in legislation.

Legislation, of course, is indeed our primary role here. Making sure that legislation is effective, that it will achieve the objectives we want to achieve and that we minimize or mitigate the possibility of unforeseen consequences is what 107 elected people can do if they choose to exercise their jobs and their judgment in a proper fashion. But that is not the case. It wasn't the case on the government appointments committee that I sat on, it has not been the case on any of the committees I've sat on with this Liberal government and it really is disheartening. I believe that if our constituents—the member for Brant's constituents, the constituents of all those members—saw the conduct of their elected representatives during that committee, they would be furious. The contempt that was demonstrated was amazing.

I have to reiterate something I said in committee: It may be fine if members of the Liberal benches want to diminish their own role in this House. Go ahead and do it, okay? If you guys want to diminish yourselves, go ahead and do it. You have every right to do that. If you don't want to have an opinion, if you don't want to engage in debate and discussion on the merit of legislation, go ahead. Don't bother. Diminish your role. You have

every right to do so. But you don't have the right to do it to others, and that's what you're engaging in. You're not only dismissing yourselves, but you're dismissing the role of others, and that is contemptible. It's absolutely contemptible that these members on the Liberal benches would do that.

If you're a member of the Liberal Party and you choose to gag yourselves, to handcuff yourselves, to put blinders on, that's fine. You get to deal with your constituents when you act like that. But you have no right to do that to members on this side or other members of your own party who want to advocate for their constituents.

I really have seen enough of the committee process in this House. I know why there's apathy and complacency among the members of the general public when it comes to politics. We don't have to look any further as to why that apathy and complacency is so abundant in this province. All we have to do is look at ourselves, look at the conduct of ourselves in this House and people will see; people will understand exactly why.

Laughter.

Mr. Randy Hillier: There are elected members here who are laughing and chuckling. The member from Algoma thinks this is a funny and hilarious debate, as does the member for Brant.

0920

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I guess the member for Algoma likes Fox News and thinks he should be watching Fox News instead of engaging in debate and advocating for his constituents. This is not acceptable.

Once again, why would they have prevented an amendment to this bill which would have brought the five-year review, the sunset review, back to this House so every member could look at it, so every member could have input into whether it was working well or not working well, if it had shortcomings, if it had improvements that could be done? But no, it's not acceptable to this Liberal government that reviews and reports get tabled and that we have knowledge to make informed commentary on legislation.

It is unjustifiable that that amendment was turned down. Absolutely, unequivocally, it was unjustifiable. I'd like to hear somebody from the Liberal benches say why it is important that they remain in ignorance with legislation. Why is ignorance so blissful to the members of the Liberal Party that they will not—will not—amend legislation so that the reports come into this House so that we can all have a review, we can all take part? Why is ignorance so important to members of the Liberal benches? Why do you view that the only one who ought to have comment or to have eyes is the minister of the day?

I'm glad to see the minister has come into the House. I would have liked to have heard his comments as well on this bill, but I'll be listening to what the minister has to say on third reading. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I rise to speak to third reading of Bill 150, the Toronto Transit Commission Labour Disputes Resolution Act. This follows a request by the elected representatives of the city of Toronto, the Toronto city council, that the TTC be made an essential service.

We said we would take this request seriously, and we did. We said we would consult with those affected, and we have. We said we would act quickly, given the time constraints, and we are. We listened to representatives of the city, to the bargaining agents involved and to the Toronto Transit Commission.

Let's remind ourselves who the primary stakeholder in all of this is. It's the people of Toronto. Every business day, 1.5 million people use the TTC, and many, many more are impacted by work stoppages at the Toronto Transit Commission. By moving forward with this legislation we are acting to protect not only those who ride and rely on the TTC, but also those who are seriously affected by work stoppages at Toronto's public transit system.

All parties in this House have set a precedent on this issue. In 2008 the TTC strike began on a Friday night and was ended by the time Monday rush hour began. The impact of that strike was reduced only because of back-to-work legislation that was enacted—back-to-work legislation that was supported by all parties of this House. By their actions, all parties of this House acknowledged the essential nature of the TTC when they voted to end that work stoppage. After that vote, it was binding arbitration that was issued to conclude the collective agreement.

In fact, since 1974, this House has voted the TTC back to work five times. Those House votes speak clearly and convincingly about the essential nature of TTC service in the lives of Torontonians. The TTC is unique in its size, scope and impact on the city it serves and its surrounding communities.

What we are proposing is all about helping the people of Toronto and the GTA and ensuring that their needs are met. Foremost among those needs is their safety, their health and their well-being. I would like to read part of the December 15, 2010, motion adopted by the TTC board of directors. That motion stated, "Over one million Torontonians rely on the TTC to get to work, school and conduct their lives each day. The city of Toronto is simply not designed to function without an operating ... transit system....

"TTC strikes are an economic, social and environmental disaster that grinds the entire GTA to a standstill. The cost of transit strikes in Toronto has been estimated to be $50 million per day in lost economic activity. The environmental harm caused by the complete absence of transit and thousands of additional vehicles on the road is incalculable."

We said we would act quickly, given the fact that the agreements between the TTC and its bargaining agents expire on March 31, 2011. The TTC and its workers have a right to know what the rules of that bargaining round will be. And the people of the city of Toronto, speaking through their elected representatives, have a right to ask the province that they be protected from the impact of TTC work stoppages, now and in the future.

Across this country and over the course of decades, provinces have deemed certain workers essential. They have replaced strikes and lockouts with a fair and neutral system of binding arbitration. Police, firefighters and hospital workers in Ontario and across Canada have been considered to be essential to the health and safety of our citizens and to the very functioning of our society. The people of the city of Toronto have a right to say to us that they need their transit system to make their city function.

We have listened to the 1.5 million people who ride and rely on the TTC every business day. This proposed legislation is all about helping the people of Toronto. Our goal and intent is to protect public safety, health and the environment.

It is self-evident to anyone who seriously and honestly looks at the situation that the people of Toronto are right when they say that the TTC is essential for their city to function. As many have said, the vital importance and the indispensable nature of Toronto's public transit system is reflected in the fact that this Legislature has enacted legislation to end or prevent TTC work stoppages five times since 1974. That fact cannot be denied. But the vital importance, the essential nature of the TTC to the life of Toronto is also made evident through a report that was commissioned and published by the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 113, in March 2008. I would like to quote a number of sections of that report.

The report opens with a question: "What would the city of Toronto be like without public transit? What if we woke up one day and all of our public transit infrastructure had simply vanished?"

The report goes on to ask, "How many more smog days would come from the additional car travel?" and it states that, "Many of public transit's benefits to the economic, social and environmental health of our city are invisibly integrated into our daily life."

This 2008 report—again, commissioned and published by Local 113 of the Amalgamated Transit Union—examines in great detail and goes on to describe the negative health and environmental impact of the loss of TTC services: "In the city without transit, we would peer through a brown haze to see over 178,000 additional cars on the road on any given business day. These cars would clearly be moving very slowly, and would wait in long impatient streams around the city, spewing additional emissions and costing their owners thousands of dollars for the privilege of sitting in traffic."

The report goes on to make clear: "The cost of mental and emotional distress, of job reduction and disability, cannot be captured by the bald statistics of medical costs.

"Injuries and fatalities from car crashes are the most common cause of death and injury in Canada. Without public transit, car trips in Toronto would increase by a significant percentage (over 350,000 trips each business day). The additional congestion, frustration and stress would increase the dangers of driving even more."

The report continues: "In a nationwide study, MKI estimates additional costs to the Canadian economy of $1.1 billion in crash costs, not including pain and suffering, if there was no public transit. Increased traffic accidents cost taxpayers money in government services, emergency response, medical costs, and in reduced travel time for all affected drivers. Lost productivity and the costs of pain and suffering add to the costs of driving accidents."

0930

The ATU-commissioned report also states: "Transit also reduces the local smog levels. Cars are responsible for about 27% of local smog, which leads directly to asthma incidents and emergency visits to hospital, as well as premature deaths.... A recent Toronto Public Health study reviews 2004 figures and calculates the impact at $2.86 billion, a figure that is almost double the original estimate." This is their quote. Perhaps most importantly, in its final section the report concludes: "Transit provides essential transportation, accessibility and equity for commuters, ensures a cleaner and safer urban environment, reduces the medical and environmental costs of car dependence and provides intangible additional benefits of physical activity, reduced sprawl etc."

The findings of this report, prepared by the ATU, confirm what our government has been saying since the introduction of this bill. While some choose to ignore or downplay these impacts, there is a clear and convincing public health and safety issue at stake when considering Toronto's public transit system and its availability and reliability for the people of Toronto.

Let me now address the manner in which TTC contract negotiations would be undertaken. Under this proposed legislation, if the parties cannot reach an agreement on their own—and let me stress "if," because we should all be clear that nothing in this proposed legislation negates a deal being reached at the bargaining table. Our government has been consistent in our support for the collective bargaining process and in our belief that the best agreements are those that are reached at the bargaining table.

Across this country and over the course of decades, provinces have deemed certain workers essential. In these instances, the appropriate step to take is to put in place a fair and neutral system of binding arbitration. In Ontario and across Canada, police, firefighters and hospital workers have been considered to be essential in their communities. The city of Toronto has said to us that without their transit system, the city simply cannot function.

Under this proposed legislation, strikes and lockouts at the TTC would be prohibited. Work stoppages and the threat of work stoppages at the TTC would be replaced by referring all outstanding unresolved contract matters to arbitration. Binding interest arbitration is a fair and neutral method of settling collective agreement issues when the parties can't reach a settlement on their own. In collective bargaining, the parties would follow the process established under the Ontario Labour Relations Act, including notice to bargain, and conciliation.

If the TTC and one of its bargaining agents couldn't settle a contract in bargaining, a conciliation officer from the Ministry of Labour would be appointed. If, after dis-

cussions with both parties, the conciliation officer reported that the parties were unable to conclude an agreement, the dispute would be referred to arbitration. The parties would then be able to agree on an appointment of an arbitrator. If they were unable to agree, the Minister of Labour could appoint one.

Again, I want to emphasize that the parties would not be prohibited from continuing to bargain toward a new collective agreement during the arbitration process. In fact, they would be encouraged to do so. If they were to settle any matters between themselves and were to notify the arbitrator, the arbitrator's decision would be limited to outstanding matters necessary to conclude a collective agreement.

Binding arbitration is by no means a new way of settling collective agreements in settings where the vital interest of the public is at stake. Compulsory interest arbitration already exists within the police, fire and hospital sectors. From January 2000 to January 2011, there were more than 6,000 settlements involving parties who are subject to compulsory interest arbitration. Importantly, almost 80% of these settlements were achieved without having to go to arbitration.

Ministry of Labour conciliation officers and mediators are available to assist parties in reaching collective agreements. According to the collective bargaining information service at the Ministry of Labour, as of March 2011, there are approximately 260,000 Ontario employees who are covered by compulsory interest arbitration collective agreements. That represents almost 31% of our broader public sector employees in the province. In situations where the public's health and safety are at stake, it is clear that binding arbitration serves the interests of the public and the parties involved.

What should be equally clear is the critical role the TTC plays in assuring the health and safety of Torontonians. The greater Toronto area has the highest concentration of health care facilities in Canada, with 40 hospitals, 84 long-term-care homes and 21 community care centres. This includes hospitals with trauma centres, such as Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, and specialized hospitals, such as Princess Margaret and the Hospital for Sick Children. I think we can all agree on the importance of the services that staff at these facilities provide, and I think we can all acknowledge that a great many of these dedicated men and women rely on the TTC to get to and from work every day. What do the opponents of this bill say to the staff of these facilities, to the people who work in operating and emergency rooms, to those who work in nursing homes, to the patients and families who depend on them? "Hitch a ride." On this side of the House, we aren't prepared to say that.

How many members of this House would like to be in a position, or would want their constituents to be in a position, of needing emergency services—an ambulance, a fire truck or a police car—when our roads are clogged by the kind of congestion that occurs during rush hour when TTC services are not there?

Our government received a request from the elected representatives of the people of the city of Toronto to prohibit strikes and lockouts on the TTC. This request emerged out of the desire of Torontonians to be protected from the tremendous impact caused by the loss, and potential loss, of TTC services. The people of Toronto are in the best position to know what impact that has on their lives, and we have listened to them.

We have seriously considered the situation and consulted with the city, the TTC and affected bargaining agents. We have acted in the responsible manner this situation so clearly calls for. Our legislation takes a balanced approach. It ensures collective bargaining can continue; it protects the rights of workers and the public. Passing this legislation is the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I may be joined by the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Timmins–James Bay.

In a free and democratic society, one of the most fundamental, if not the most fundamental, right is the right of any working man or woman to withdraw their labour. If they can't, then they're not free. Also, in this province and in this country, we recognize the right of workers to collectively bargain. Indeed, the Supreme Court of Canada, in the BC health services decision, affirmed that the right to collectively bargain is a constitutional right. It's the right of free association.

This province has undergone a lengthy history of refinement in its labour relations legislation, and this government today is turning back the hands of time to an unacceptable era in Ontario and Canadian history.

One of the most fundamental flaws in the argument made by the minister, on behalf of Mr. McGuinty, is that one can make things essential services. It's simply not the case. Things are either essential services or they're not. They don't become essential services because a bill happens to say so, whether it's in the preamble or elsewhere. I wish, I had hoped, that the minister, and if not the minister, then the minions in the Premier's office who drive these things, would have paid closer attention to some of the presentations that were made in the very brief committee hearings—because of course the government time-allocated this bill.

0940

The government used its power as a majority to ensure that there were but two scant afternoons of committee hearings—literally a few hours. And similarly, with their guillotine motion—a motion that has become all too common in this Legislature, a motion that stifles debate, that stifles discussion, that stifles democratic process—with their time allocation motion, the government has restricted third reading debate to about one hour: 20 minutes per caucus; hardly an appropriate length of time in which to fully discuss the implications of this thoroughly flawed legislation.

If the minister had paid attention, he would have paid attention, amongst other things, to the presentation by the Ontario Federation of Labour. The Ontario Federation of Labour was very helpful to the committee with its reference to the United Nations' International Labour Organ-

ization convention 87, to which this country, Canada, is a signatory. Amongst other things, that convention 87 discusses essential services. Paragraph 581—the presentation was that specific: paragraph 581—"To determine situations in which a strike could be prohibited, the criterion which has to be established is the existence of a clear and imminent threat to the life, personal safety or health of the whole or part of the population."

Further, and even more striking and more significant and more pointed, for those who didn't get it the first time, there's paragraph 587, where the ILO, the International Labour Organization, has ruled that metropolitan transit systems and railways are not essential, so that governments are not permitted to ban the right of these workers to strike.

This bill will not improve service on the TTC. This bill will not improve the morale of TTC workers. This bill won't increase the number of routes or the number of streets that are serviced by the TTC, and this bill will not stop or prevent work stoppages. It will simply make them illegal.

Make no mistake about it; there's a problem at the TTC. There's a serious problem there, and it's a problem that's far more likely to be solved by encouraging and facilitating collective bargaining—meaningful negotiations at the bargaining table. Every time you have a denial of the right to withdraw one's labour, that attack on collective bargaining, you undermine collective bargaining. It is beyond naive for this minister to suggest that somehow, "Oh, collective bargaining can still take place," notwithstanding the fact that at the end of the day, a third party, an arbitrator, is going to hammer the table with his or her imposed ruling. Hardly a settlement.

The experience in other jurisdictions has been that in arbitration regimes, labour relations deteriorate. The strength of the imposed resolution is diminished, because it's trite to say—and the minister should know this. He surely should know that a settlement that's arrived at by the parties directly involved, through collaboration and through negotiation and through compromise and a series of concessions, is a resolution that's far more likely to be complied with, and complied with voluntarily. It creates a far healthier environment.

If you're going to address the problems at the TTC, you tell TTC management that when they've got a problem, they sit down and negotiate a resolution. They don't come running, cap in hand, to the government of the day saying, "Fix it for us," because that's been part of the problem as well. Every time there has been a serious dispute between workers and management at the TTC, this Legislature has ordered the workers back to work. That's part of the problem, not part of the solution, because management had no incentive to resolve differences. Management had no incentive whatsoever because they knew they could come, cap in hand, to the government of the day, and the government of the day would address their needs.

I, for one, and New Democrats don't buy into the proposition that when Mayor Ford or his council asks the government to do something, the government should do it. This has serious implications. This is a full frontal attack on labour, on working women and men here in this province of Ontario. This isn't the Ford model; it's the Wisconsin model, and that is a very dangerous thing.

We're already witnessing this government's attack on working people and upon the trade union movement. We're already witnessing this McGuinty government that refuses to extend card-based certification to some of the most vulnerable workers in this province. We're already witnessing this McGuinty government's attack on agricultural workers when it denies them the right to collectively bargain, notwithstanding that agricultural workers are some of the lowest-paid workers, and they're workers in Ontario working in some of the most dangerous and lethal occupations.

This government embraced Bill 7 when it was imposed by Mike Harris as Premier in 1995, which revoked the NDP anti-scab legislation. This government has refused—refused—to restore anti-scab legislation in the province of Ontario. Mr. McGuinty and his Liberals are hardly a friend of working women and men. Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals are hardly a friend of the trade union movement.

New Democrats will have nothing to do with it. New Democrats believe strongly and adamantly that a strong economy means a healthy workforce, and a healthy workforce means a unionized workforce; that a strong economy means workers making decent wages, and if workers are going to make decent wages they've got to belong to trade unions so that they can negotiate those wages; that a strong economy and a strong province mean that workers ought to be able to negotiate and control their workplaces so they can arrive home at night in the same physical health condition as they went to work in the morning; and that workers in this province deserve and have a right to pensions—pensions that are protected, pensions that are stable, pensions that are strong and allow working women and men to live out their senior years with some modest level of dignity.

Well, today Mr. McGuinty demonstrates his true colours when it comes to working people, when it comes to trade unions and when it comes to collective bargaining.

We will be voting against this legislation. We will be voting against it with enthusiasm. We will be voting against it in solidarity with TTC workers and other working women and men across this province and country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I echo all of the comments that were made by my colleague Mr. Kormos, the member from Welland–Thorold. I've only got a few minutes because I've got other caucus members who want to get on, but I want to make three points.

The first point I want to make is that we measure ourselves by the way we treat others in our society. When we take rights away from individuals that other citizens are able to enjoy, I think it reflects badly on democracy overall and what this government is all about.

The right to strike is a right that is afforded all workers. Why? It is a way of being able to put pressure on the employer in the case of negotiations. To argue that TTC workers are essential services and we need to take their rights away, I think, is a stretch beyond the pale.

The second point I would make: The Liberals are quite something. They try to have it both ways. One day they come into the House, and they say, "We love workers. Let us give you a hug. We want to hug you so much," and the next day, they take the knife and stab them in the back. I say to the Liberals across the way, you will reap what you will sow—or whatever way that particular saying goes.

0950

I will say this here, though, because I really do want to leave some time, and that is that the workers are going to get whacked two ways now. You've got the Liberals, who now have this bill that at the end of debate, when it's finally proclaimed, will take away the right to strike from TTC workers in the city and make them an essential service. Then you've got a Conservative caucus that's saying that if they win in the next election, they're going to take away binding arbitration. So we're going to have workers in Toronto who are going to get whacked by the Liberals within the next few minutes, and, if the Tories win government, are going to get whacked again.

So I say there's really one alternative in this province: That is to vote NDP. Why? Because we believe, number one, that we need to treat workers fairly. Workers in this province have to be treated in a way that allows them to negotiate fair collective agreements.

I thought Bob Kinnear and the ATU were quite responsible in their approach to negotiations. They said, "Listen, we're prepared to not go out on strike in order to find some sort of an agreement that meets and satisfies the needs of both management and employees." They were more than reasonable.

I think the only unreasonable ones here are, first, the Liberals, for doing essential services legislation, and extremely unreasonable are the Conservatives, who say they want to take away the right to binding arbitration.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: All I can say is that I was in the steel business for over 30 years, in a union atmosphere. Do you really think we would have got improvements in benefits and wages if we didn't have the right to strike? I personally went through two tough strikes: five months and four months. I had to resort to doing other jobs just to put food on the table, because the companies were refusing.

Do you think that companies are going to voluntarily give you money and co-operate in arbitration to give people what they want? I think not.

I also believe that this government forced the part-time university professors and their staff back to work. Now they're forcing the transit workers back. Who's next? Pretty soon, everyone is going to be an essential service and the right to strike will be gone. The right to unionize: They're attacking unions throughout North America. You're attacking them here in Toronto, and it's going to continue. It's outrageous that this would go through, that this government would back such a movement.

I know for a fact, during all the years I saw this develop, that in the last 10 years there have been North-American-wide corporate and government attacks on unions and the right to strike. It's happening; look what's going on in the States right now. People are sitting in the Legislature, protesting, because they're attacking unions.

And talk about public sector workers. In a city in Alabama, the town is broke. They didn't put enough money into the pensions, and the former police chief, the former fire chief and the former public sector workers are now suing their own town because they've cut off their pensions. This is going on.

They're pulling the rug from underneath working people in North America. This is going to continue, and it's going to continue to a point where I don't know how the people are going to react, because I know a lot of them wouldn't put up with this in the States.

Things are going to get worse. I warn all union leaders in this province and this country that this is just the start of what's going to happen to unions in this country unless we make a stand now and tell them that enough is enough. We have a right to strike; we have a right to speak; we have a right to withdraw our labour if we're not being dealt with fairly and honestly.

It's absolutely outrageous, what you're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: I want to add my voice to this debate for many reasons. The first is that we all know that the right to unionize, the right to strike, was something that didn't come easy. A lot of men and women in Ontario fought really hard to have the right to unionize, to have the right to strike. Those rights were finally enshrined into Canada's Constitution, with the caveat that if there was danger to the life, health and safety of the public, we could make exceptions.

This is a stretch here, to say that transit workers are actually an essential service. This is a really slippery slope. When I see the Minister of Labour stand up and say that you may not be able to get to the emergency room because it will be so congested, or the firefighters won't be able to get to your house because the streets will be so congested, this is an insult to every firefighter in the city, and this is an insult to every EMS worker in the city. If there is an emergency, those people are trained and they will get to your house and they will get you to the hospital, no matter what stands in their way. This is what they're trained to do. This is what they do, and they do it well. They do it to protect us, and they do it because they want to help people. To link those two is completely ludicrous.

Transit workers have a right to unionize. They have the right to withdraw their labour if negotiations fail. This is a fundamental right. Think about it: We are taking away constitutional rights. The decisions that we will be

making in this House this morning are huge. We are entering a slippery slope, because there are transit workers all over this province. There is congestion in most big cities in this province. We are—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Timmins.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Congestion in Timmins? Well, maybe. Hey, he says so; it must be.

What I'm trying to say is that we are eliminating the right to strike for what will shortly be the majority of municipal workers in the city of Toronto. Once we take away the right to strike for public transit workers in Toronto, we have opened the door for every other city to do the exact same thing based on the same argument: "If we don't have transit, there will be more traffic."

I don't buy this. This makes no sense. You don't take away a fundamental right because there's traffic in a city. That makes no sense. This is what rights are all about. There is no danger to life with the job of a transit worker. There is no danger to health with the job of a transit worker. Will it be inconvenient? Absolutely; no doubt about this. But it does not meet the criteria for taking away a constitutional right that they have fought long and hard to achieve.

The attack on democratic rights that is about to be delivered by the Liberal government will have long-lasting repercussions. Let's think about this. Let's give a sober thought to this. We are opening up a door to a slippery slope.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know this is a very tough issue. On the one hand we have the right to strike, on the other hand we have what the municipality wants and on the other hand we have what is actually an essential service.

I find it interesting—especially listening to the last speaker, and I realize there's a lot of passion there—it's my understanding that the Amalgamated Transit Union in its own report in 2008 basically said that transit was an essential service here in the city of Toronto. You can't have it both ways.

To my way of thinking, first of all, it's a well-known fact around the House that with anything that goes to binding arbitration, usually the employer ends up in a much better financial situation if you don't have binding arbitration. That's one of the biggest complaints about the arbitration process that we currently have: that it leads to higher salaries. I've got no problem with that at all. I like the current system we have.

What I find interesting is that I know the union leadership wants to have the right to strike. That has been the typical response of the union movement and the union leadership over the last 100 years etc. When you talk to the individual members, though, often you get quite a different view. They kind of like the fact that they are subject to binding arbitration. They are not all that clear that they want the right to strike.

To my way of thinking, I am a believer in as much municipal autonomy as possible. The city of Toronto has put its position on the table through its elected council. You may not like the council; you may not like certain members of the council; their position is that they regard it as an essential service and they want this particular law to be passed. There's absolutely no reason why we should inconvenience the people of Toronto—75% of whom, according to the latest poll, regard the service as an essential service—by not regarding the TTC as an essential service.

So I say to the members of the NDP, I agree that the right to strike is very important, but it is trumped in this particular case by the fact that the city of Toronto, through its elected council, wants this; and secondly, that the use of the TTC by people in Ontario is truly an essential service. Therefore, we believe that these kinds of contracts, if they can't be negotiated between the two parties, should go to binding arbitration.

1000

This is the right bill for the right time in the 21st century that we all live in. This is the right approach, and I think in their heart of hearts, even the members of the NDP know that this is the way to go in this particular century.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 150. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Since a recorded vote is required, this vote will be taken after question period this morning.

Third reading vote deferred.

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Resuming the debate adjourned March 29, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2011 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2011 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to take a few moments this morning to speak in favour of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2011.

The reason I want to speak on it is that, Mr. Speaker, as you know, I worked for my predecessor, now Senator Bob Runciman, for a number of years, and I had the pleasure of also continuing to work with some of the staff that Senator Bob had. In my constituency office, Lynn Campbell and Pauline Connolly, two constituency assist-

ants, now work for me, and my legislative assistant, Dianne Tominac, worked for Mr. Runciman for many years. I think Dianne said it best this morning when she referred to Mr. Runciman as a tireless advocate for victims' rights, and I'm pleased today to put a few comments on the record in favour of Bill 163.

You see, it was Senator Runciman, as MPP Bob Runciman, Minister Bob Runciman, who on April 28, 1999, first introduced Christopher's Law, Canada's first sex offender registry, in response to the recommendations of the coroner's inquest into the murder of 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson. It was also Senator Bob Runciman who had the privilege of sponsoring Bill S-2, the Protecting Victims from Sex Offenders Act. The legislation will significantly strengthen the national sex offender registry and the national DNA bank.

In looking at the bill and also reading Bill S-2, I think it will ensure that every individual who is convicted of a sexual offence in Canada is automatically registered with the national sex offender registry and required to provide a DNA sample to the national DNA bank, which certainly wasn't the case under the current law. At present, as you know, a crown attorney must first make application to have the offender registered once he or she is convicted of a sex crime and the presiding judge has the direction to make such an order. Bill S-2 in the Senate would eliminate that feature. As you know, we on this side of the House were very pleased that we were the first government in Canada to present this, and Bill 163 will put us in line with that Senate bill, Bill S-2.

When I'm reviewing some of the notes and some of the documents that we had in our office, and as well some of the speeches in the Senate, I look at a quote that Jim Stephenson, Christopher's father, echoed when talking about Bill S-2. His quote is as follows: "I have no doubt these changes will help solve and prevent terrible sexual offences on innocent victims. I urge parliamentarians to quickly pass this bill into law."

The Stephensons don't want to see other families go through what they did. If you review the circumstances surrounding Christopher's abduction and murder, it's clear that an effective sex offender registry might have saved Christopher's life. I'm pleased today just to provide a few comments, because I know how important Christopher's Law was in 1999 with now-Senator Runciman and how he was pleased that, in his new role as senator, he was able to present and co-sponsor Bill S-2. Our legislation, under Bill 163, and Bill S-2 now meld.

Thank you for allowing me to provide a few comments in tribute to my predecessor. I'm very pleased to support Minister Bradley's Bill 163.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Seeing none, Mr. Bradley has moved second reading of Bill 163. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Since a vote is required on this, it will be carried out after question period this morning.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further business at this time, this House will stand in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1006 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to welcome the family of today's page captain, Devan Scholefield, who's from the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore: his mom, Cindy, is here; his dad, Paul; his brother Mitchell; and his grandparents Jim and Peggy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me this morning to introduce two guests in the members' east gallery: Mr. Greg Young and Mr. Greg Conlin. They recently won a silent auction item to have lunch with their MPP. They're looking forward to a lively question period today and then heading for lunch with their MPP.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I want to take the opportunity to welcome a couple of guests to the east gallery: Glen and Debbie Phinemore and Gary and Lynn Vanderherburg, and of course, my wife, Diane. Welcome.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce Ahmet Tamirci, the executive director, and Mehmet Budak, the executive coordinator of the Turkish Canadian Chamber of Commerce. They're sitting there. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Waterloo—Wellington Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Wellington–Halton Hills, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was privileged to represent the people of Waterloo–Wellington for many years, but it's now Wellington–Halton Hills.

I'm pleased to introduce one of our hard-working staff members, Daniel Gordon, who's here today in the chamber.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome to the House Thomas Eaton, Emiko Graham, Jessie Jay and Louis Szilagyi, who are the classmates of my staffer Jackie Roach's son Griffin at Quest public school in Toronto. Welcome here for community resource week.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce to the Legislature a very special person. Her name is Jessica Whitbread, and she's just won a recognition from the ministry responsible for women's issues. It's called the Leading Women, Building Communities program. Jessica Whitbread, congratulations. Next to her is Angel Parks. Angel, welcome as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me in welcoming three guests of mine in the

Speaker's gallery today. We have a long-time friend of mine and a great heritage activist and supporter of heritage buildings from London, Shmuel Farhi; his wife, Nicole Laidler; and their son Natan Farhi in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, after more than seven years of making sacrifices for Premier McGuinty's runaway spending, Ontario families were looking for some sign that you understood; that you got it that they're looking for some relief so they can spend on their priorities, not Dalton McGuinty's priorities. But you missed that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd caution the member about the use of names.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yesterday's speech, in fact, when you look at it, is nothing more than a prescription for Premier McGuinty to raise taxes once again on the backs of average hard-working families. Minister, why don't you come clean? Is it an increase in the HST? Is it a carbon tax? Is it a school board tax? Won't you be honest? What tax hike do you have planned for Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We laid out a plan yesterday, and we haven't seen a plan from the member opposite. In fact, they were going to unveil their plan at a convention at the end of this month, and they cancelled the convention. I don't get it.

Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition what Ontario families want. They want the best education for their kids, and we're investing in that. That leader and his party will shut down full-day kindergarten. They will roll back the progress we've made on public education. They want test scores to drop to where they were when they were in office.

In terms of health care, billions more for better front-line services is what Ontarians want. They want a plan. They got one from us. They haven't seen anything from that leader. They're right out of the debate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: What a bunch of nonsense from a finance minister who has simply run out of gas, run out of ideas and, thank goodness, is rapidly running out of time.

This is where we stand: An Ontario PC government would invest in front-line health care, invest in classroom education, cut out the McGuinty waste and—yes—give average, everyday families the relief they desperately need.

Your plan is obviously another tax hike. We've seen this movie before. Dalton McGuinty has one pattern: break promises, spend more of your money and then increase taxes on Ontario families.

Minister, come clean: What tax are you going to increase?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When we brought in the largest personal tax cuts for all Ontarians, that member and his party voted against them. We laid out a tax plan for jobs and growth that was supported by the federal Conservative government of the day with $4 billion. That member and his party voted against it. We now have the lowest personal tax rate on the first $37,000 of income. We cut small business taxes by 20%—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark knows better. He needs to be cautious with his comments. I will have to warn him.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've created for Ontarians the most tax credits on sales tax across the country. Then, when we lowered Ontario's energy bills by 10%, that member and his party voted against it. Eighty-six per cent of senior Ontarians are paying less taxes; 90% of all Ontarians less—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The finance minister knows that his numbers simply don't add up. The last shoe to drop is: What tax are you going to increase to pay for your runaway spending?

Minister, we've seen this movie before. Premier McGuinty solemnly swore that he wouldn't increase taxes, and he brought in the so-called health tax. Premier McGuinty solemnly swore, "I won't do it again," and he brought in the HST tax grab. I know, Minister, that you're now going for the hat trick.

Let me ask you directly: Are you planning on raising the HST by one point, or is it two?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government won't raise the HST at all. Let's be crystal clear.

Now let me ask the Leader of the Opposition a question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member for his assistance.

Look, we're just into the very first question, and I've had to rise on a number of occasions. I recognize that there was a significant event that took place in the province of Ontario yesterday, an event that certainly allows the members—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Agriculture. It is an opportunity now for the opposition to question the government on this event that took place yesterday. I would just ask that we have some courtesy in

this House, not so much for ourselves but for our guests who are watching today, who are very interested in wanting to hear the debate that takes place.

New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister: Yesterday's budget was the first one in memory that spent more time talking about the leader of the official opposition than it did about ordinary, hard-working Ontario families. It is absolutely extraordinary how far—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry. Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not a laughing matter, Minister of the Environment. These are issues that are very important to the people of Ontario, and the people of Ontario expect the opposition to do its part and the government to do its part.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It shows how far out of touch the McGuinty government has come. When families are struggling to pay the basics, to pay the hydro bill; when they're coping with smart meters that are nothing more than tax machines; when they've lost jobs across this province; when they've seen the HST take more and more out of their pockets, you had absolutely no relief for ordinary families, for seniors. Instead of providing relief, you turned the budget into a partisan attack against the opposition—an extraordinary missed opportunity to give families relief.

Minister, how out of touch are you that you see families as—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I did want to finish my last answer. Later this week, I will be submitting this plan to the Auditor General of Ontario for him to sign off on the reasonableness of our projections. We had to do that because the Hudak-Harris government, the previous government, left a hidden deficit of $5.5 billion.

I challenge the leader—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I challenge the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My comments do go both ways in this House. As much as I want to hear you ask the question, I do want to hear a response.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to give the auditor his platform. Unfortunately, he doesn't have one. He won't tell people that he's cutting $3 billion from health care. He won't say which hospitals he'll close or which schools he'll close.

We've laid out a plan. It is a solid plan that gets Ontario back to deficit. I refer him to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, come on. You said you'd released your plan in August, maybe later, and we all know—seniors know, families know and Premier McGuinty knows—his real plan will come out if he's re-elected, with a whopping tax increase on the backs of average Ontario families once again.

Minister, there was no relief for struggling seniors in your budget. There was no relief in your budget for hard-working families trying to raise the kids. The only time you mention them is on page 16, where you allege that they have more money in their pockets today. That's right up there with the likelihood of the Toronto Maple Leafs winning the Stanley Cup in 2011.

I don't know, Finance Minister, where you and the Premier have been. Ontario families are looking for a break. Why do you see those struggling families as your own personal ATM machine?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll make one prediction: The Toronto Maple Leafs will win a Stanley Cup long before he's Premier of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I am feeling much like a referee in a good hockey game between the Leafs and the Senators right now. Sometimes the referee will need to take a little bit of action. If this persists, we're going to have to start sending some members to the penalty box and perhaps issuing some game misconducts.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When we created the property tax credit for Ontario seniors and the energy tax credit, he voted against it. When we doubled that same tax credit, he voted against it. When we cut taxes for Ontario seniors making less than $37,000, he voted against it. When we created the Ontario clean energy benefit to lower seniors' hydro bills by 10%, he voted against it.

We've laid out a plan. It's a plan about eliminating a deficit as we build on our achievements in health care and education. That's what's important to the people of Ontario, not his empty rhetoric, lack of plan, or anything that he has had to say of substance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, that's a bet I'm willing to take, but I'll tell you what: Let's let the people of Ontario decide if they want change or four more years of the same.

Do you know what? If you want a sure bet, if you want a 100% guarantee, if you want to take it to the bank, then bet that Dalton McGuinty will raise taxes once again—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's four times I've had to remind the honourable member. If he persists, I'm just going to bypass his question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I hear you say your slogan is going to be, "We won't raise taxes. This time we really mean it."

Nobody believes you. You're out of credibility. You're out of time. Why don't you just admit it? Are you going to raise the HST by one point or two, or is it a carbon tax? Just be honest.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition stands up and says this on the same morning he cancelled his policy convention where they were going to outline their platform. So we're wondering: What is it they're hiding? Why is it that he takes a phone call from his federal leader and says, "Well, we're going to cancel that"?

The only thing I would ask is: When he spoke to his federal leader, did he talk about their failure to deal a realistic immigration deal to Ontario? Did he ask the federal leader about the Canada health transfer and whether or not that government, if it were elected, would stand up and protect Ontario? Those are the important issues.

We look forward to seeing a platform from the member, and until we see one, all we can do is draw comparisons with what he did when he was part of a previous government versus what he's saying now. The people of Ontario have seen that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the finance minister. Yesterday afternoon, this minister presented the McGuinty government's latest budget, the budget that will forever go down in history as the much-ado-about-nothing budget.

I've had a chance to pore over the budget and my question is a very simple one: Where is the relief for Ontario families who are struggling to pay the bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think children's mental health and addictions are very important. I think risk management for our farmers is very important. I think 60,000 spaces in post-secondary education is very important, and I think laying out a plan that brings balance back to our budget and creates opportunity for Ontarians is very important.

We've laid out a plan, a plan that strikes the right balance between new investments in the services that people need and want and that gets us back to balance in a responsible fashion. Shame on the NDP for saying no to children's mental health and calling it nothing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families were looking for some light at the end of a very long, dark tunnel, but the latest McGuinty government budget provides not even a flicker for families worried about jobs, about reduced incomes, about soaring household bills.

The finance minister stands here claiming that he spent the last several weeks actually listening to families. If he was doing so much listening, why did he ignore what families want and need to help them make ends meet?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member wants to shine light, but it's all darkness over there. Why is it that that when we created the northern Ontario industrial energy policy, she and her party voted against it? Why is it that when we created the energy credits for northern families, she voted against it? Why did she oppose us cutting energy bills by 10% when she only wanted to do it by 8%? Why did they oppose that?

The investments we have made are the right investments for a better future for Ontario. We've in fact laid out a plan that gets Ontario back to balance and protects the crucial investments we've made in health care and education. Those are important to all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here is what I find especially galling about this budget: Families are going to be squeezed for more, including an additional $1.1 billion in sales taxes, as big corporations and profitable banks cash in with huge corporate tax giveaways. Does the finance minister really, truly believe that this is fair to families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Absolutely, because we cut personal taxes by $11 billion for Ontarians, and because we have the most generous sales tax credits and we have the most generous property tax credits in the country.

You know, it was interesting: Last night on French-language television, the member for Timmins said we didn't cut enough, which is quite interesting. It's unfortunate that most of Ontario couldn't hear that. I know my colleague was on with him.

What's the NDP about? We just don't know. They vote against energy benefits, they vote against tax credits for seniors, they vote against lower taxes for all Ontarians, and then they stand up and say, "What are you doing?"

We laid out a plan. It's clear and it's working. It's about a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is again to the finance minister. It wasn't so long ago that this minister boasted his government's approach would create 600,000 jobs. Well, not so fast, apparently: Yesterday's budget shows that the government now expects 60,000 fewer new jobs in the next two years.

Since they got the job projections so completely wrong in the last budget, why should anybody believe they've gotten them right this time around?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, let me remind the leader of the third party that it was, in fact, the Conservative Party's expert witness at parliamentary budget hearings who said that over the next 10 years, starting last year, Ontario would create 600,000 jobs. We're on target to do just that.

Let me remind the member opposite that we added 35,000 more jobs in 2010—35,000 more than we forecasted, 91%—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East and the member from Renfrew. Remember the motto: "Hear the other side." "Hear the other side."

Please continue.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I hadn't even sat down, and you start to interject again.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thought you were asking a question.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, I was not asking a question; I was making a statement to you to hear the other side.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This side would love to hear what the Tories will do, because we have no idea what they're going to do other than close hospitals and schools.

To the leader of the third party, we have, in fact, seen 91% of the lost jobs return—Stats Canada tells us 84% full-time. We're going in the right direction. There's more to do, and this government's laid out a plan to do just that. She'll create jobs in Alberta, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister may not want to admit it, but he and his government are coming up short, real short, when it comes to their credibility. The McGuinty government promised 600,000 jobs. They bragged about it over and over and over again. Now they're saying it's going to be far, far fewer than that.

The government says it's turning a corner, but it's still on the road to nowhere, and fast. When will the finance minister finally admit that his so-called jobs plan is in complete disarray?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would refer the leader of the third party to the last NDP finance minister for Saskatchewan, who, last night on TVO, generally supported the direction of this budget. Her name is Janice MacKinnon. She also said that our tax plan for jobs and growth was absolutely the right way to go.

Now, I wouldn't advise that she do what the NDP in Nova Scotia did, which was to raise the HST in that province by two points.

Progressive voices in this province know that if you want to protect education, if you want to protect health care, there's only one party in this Legislature that is doing that, and it's the government of Premier Dalton McGuinty. The third party has a plan to move jobs to Alberta, to British Columbia, Saskatchewan, but they have no idea—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd suggest this finance minister look to Manitoba, which held the line on corporate taxes, rejected the HST and has 15,000 more jobs than they did before the recession started.

Yesterday, this minister unveiled a desperate attempt to apply a Band-Aid to a deep economic wound. Unfortunately for Ontarians, what we need is full-blown surgery. Clearly, this government has run out of steam. Now they are admitting that their job projections have been completely baseless, and struggling Ontario families are being forced to pay much, much more to receive considerably less.

Why does the minister insist on defending the status quo when the status quo is completely indefensible?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Why did the leader of the third party vote against every initiative for working families that we've brought forward? Why did you vote against the Ontario child benefit that lowers taxes for low-income Ontarians? Why did you not support us when we added another $10 million to the northern Ontario heritage fund that will create jobs across the north? Why did you not support us with the Ontario clean energy benefit? That lowers energy bills by 10% for all Ontarians, seniors included.

We have laid out a clear plan that makes life better for all Ontarians. It builds on our achievements in health care and education. It will get this province back to balance. It's important that Ontarians see the difference between this party and particularly the second party, but also the lack of any plan on the part of the third party.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the finance minister. Yesterday's speech shows just how out of touch the Premier and McGuinty Liberals have become with Ontario families. Ontario seniors have had to postpone their retirement to keep paying their mortgages, rising taxes and skyrocketing hydro bills. Yet, contrary to what they are experiencing, you say 86% of seniors have more money in their pockets.

Is it contagious? Do you sit too close to the Premier? How did you get to be so out of touch with Ontario seniors?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am proud to sit on the same team as Premier Dalton McGuinty. This morning, Premier McGuinty is in Battle Creek, Michigan, signing a deal that will bring new jobs to Belleville. That's what he's doing. That's where he is today. I'd ask the member opposite: When we created the Ontario property tax credit for seniors, why did he and the Conservatives here in Ontario vote against it? When we doubled that property tax credit, why did the Conservative Party vote against it? When we lowered taxes for the lowest-income Ontarians and for seniors, why did they vote against it?

We have a plan; we have a strong plan—no plan. Better future—bad future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Either the finance minister is out of touch or he thinks he can put phony numbers past Ontario families. The problem is, no one believes you.

You boasted about the number of bureaucrats cut from the OPS, but every one of them was an HST tax collector you sent to Ottawa. You say you added more nurses, but the Ontario Nurses' Association says the McGuinty Liberals cut 2,400 nurses since the last election. You say employment and manufacturing are up, but everyone knows that's not a true picture of Ontario today.

When will you get down to business and give Ontario families the real fiscal picture?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did that yesterday. What we haven't seen—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Early next week, I will be submitting this to the Auditor General of Ontario under a law we created, because the previous government hid a $5.5-billion deficit that plugged figures in their budget that they delivered at Magna. We had to clean up the mess.

This will be submitted; I look forward to the auditor's position. I ask the member opposite: Will you submit your plan, if you ever have one, to the Auditor General for him to sign off on your numbers? Because nothing you said in your question is accurate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Finance. In your budget yesterday, you opened the door wide open to American-style privatized public service delivery here in Ontario. From your changes to Service-Ontario to the Drummond commission, it's clear that this government is open to the ideas being promulgated by such Tea Party state governments as Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana.

Why is this government opening the door to the kind of conflict and disruption that we now see in states such as Wisconsin?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, what we are open to is working to provide the best public services at the best price to all Ontarians, and I think that's a reasonable proposition.

I would invite the member opposite to consider a couple of opportunities. First of all, we funded something called 211 about three years ago—you did vote against that; that's run by the United Way across Ontario. They would like to be able to help us offer services through 211. It's a non-profit, and they might be able to do it more effectively. So we are quite happy to work with the United Way and others.

The world is changing. It's evolving rapidly. We will make choices that help deliver public services in the most cost-effective way so that the money we save can be put to the things that are important to Ontarians: better schools and better health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This is an agenda that is not that well hidden, Mr. Finance Minister. Infrastructure Ontario is the vehicle that this government uses to build its P3 hospitals, hospitals that end up costing the public far more than if they were built through traditional public sector approaches.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Calm down. Calm down. You can go check the record: It's true.

Why is this government expanding the same failed, expensive approach to privatizing hospitals to new areas of provincial and municipal infrastructure?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to applaud the work of Infrastructure Ontario in delivering better services to all Ontarians. We have had delegations from all over the place coming to see how well that's working.

The fact is that we're building 18 new hospitals. I think there are another five that are at various advanced stages of planning. That's important, and we are getting the best deal we can.

I reject that tired old rhetoric from the 1930s, as do Ontarians. They know what is happening all over Ontario—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Tony Blair rejected it.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Tony Blair is a perfect example.

I would invite you to look at the NDP records in other provinces, but I wouldn't look back at the NDP in Ontario, the only government to ever open up and strip collective agreements with working Ontarians. That's a shameful, shameful heritage.

BREAST CANCER

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer faced by women in Ontario. Cancer Care Ontario estimates that in the next year alone, 8,900 Ontario women will develop breast cancer and approximately 2,100 women will die from it.

Thanks to recent reports, we know that Ontario is a world leader in cancer care and cancer survival rates, but the fact remains that women are still losing the battle against breast cancer. These women are our mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, friends and neighbours.

Yesterday's budget document contained a commitment to increase funding for breast cancer screening, an important part of the early detection of cancer. Would the minister please tell this House how this funding will benefit Ontario women?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for this question. I'm sure that many, if not all, members of this Legislature have been touched in one way or another by breast cancer, just as all Ontarians have been. That's why I was so very, very pleased that a $15-million expansion to the Ontario breast screening program was announced in yesterday's budget. I do want to take the opportunity to

thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his advocacy on this issue. This means an additional 90,000 breast scans over the next three years. For the last 20 years, women aged 50 and over have been able to have these screenings. This is one of the reasons Ontario's breast cancer survival rates are among the highest in the world. But we're taking this program even further by expanding eligibility to high-risk women starting at age 30.

Together with Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: This is great news for women with a higher risk of developing breast cancer. I'm confident it will go a long way to improve access to breast cancer screening in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham and across Ontario. Certainly, as a physician, I know that the Ontario breast screening program has an excellent reputation for high-quality assessment services and follow-ups.

I understand that this expanded program will be available this summer. Until then, can the minister assure breast cancer patients that the care they need is available to them today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member is absolutely correct. We're working on finalizing the eligibility criteria, and this expanded screening program will be in place this summer. We want to get it up and running as quickly as possible because the earlier cancer is detected, the better the chance of beating it. These additional scans are just part of what we're doing on the breast cancer front. These are in addition to the over 300,000 additional scans our government has added. We've also funded 53 new breast screening sites, for a total of 153 sites across the province. Through our public drug program, we funded 35 new cancer drugs, five of which are for breast cancer.

We are tackling breast cancer head on, which is more than I can say for the people opposite, the official opposition. Their cuts mean that they will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Ontario PC leader has called for a committee of this Legislature to review all government agencies. It's a remarkable step—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order, please.

Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is a remarkable step toward democracy, to take power out of the Premier's office and ask members of this Assembly to inform us on how government services should be structured. Premier McGuinty, by contrast, has proposed to contract out a review of government to a high-priced, hand-picked group of consultants on a panel led by the architect of the HST, Don Drummond. The last time we received a report to this government was when it was proposing the HST.

Is the Premier of this province contracting out the review because he can't help himself from appointing high-priced consultants, or does he simply think his caucus is too out of gas, too out of touch and too out of talent?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Members of this House do have the opportunity to put forward plans. Unfortunately, the member opposite and her party have refused to do so. I will say this about Mr. Drummond, who is one of Canada's most respected economists and who has not always agreed with this government: He was a senior official at federal finance for many years. He's one of the most published economists in this country. We look forward to hearing recommendations from him and others and we look forward to your recommendations. Unfortunately, you haven't said anything yet. You haven't given us a plan. I think that instead of insulting honourable Canadians with cheap talk, the member opposite ought to clean up the act and start showing respect to the people of Ontario and the people who generously volunteer their service.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Respect for this Legislature is actually putting the power back into the hands of MPPs in this chamber instead of hand-picked, high-priced consultants who are going to inevitably tell us that we're going to need to raise taxes.

The Ontario PCs, under our leader Tim Hudak's plan, will put the power back in the hands of the members of this Legislative Assembly to review spending and to ensure that front-line care and other critical services that we deliver in Ontario are protected.

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Your hand-picked, high-priced consultants are only accountable to the Premier of this province, who calls the shots, and the consultant you hand-picked is the same person who handed you a report to bring in the HST.

The question is not how much you're going to hike it, or if you're going to hike it; the question is, when are you going to table a new hike to the HST in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What a sad spectacle from the party of Leslie Frost and Bill Davis.

You know what? I don't think members of this Legislature ought to be trash-talking important individuals, Canadians who have made an enormous contribution to the public—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Simcoe–Grey, Lanark and Renfrew.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I look forward to Mr. Drummond's recommendations, just as I look forward to Professor Jack Mintz's recommendations. I'll remind you that he was the Conservative's leading expert at pre-budget consultations.

I think we in this House owe a courtesy to the people of Ontario: to treat them with respect and show them the

honour that they deserve. Let's work together in a calm, reasonable way to build a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

HEALTH CARE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Ontario is in the midst of an unprecedented demographic shift. The number of seniors in the province is set to double, yet, looking at yesterday's budget, you would never guess that the province was facing this drastic change. There certainly doesn't seem to be any planning to ready ourselves for it. There's nothing in the budget that will address the tsunami of Alzheimer's, there is nothing in the budget for the tens of thousands of seniors unable to access the services they need to stay in their homes, and there are no plans for our hospitals struggling with 20% ALC patients in their beds as the demand for their services grows.

How can the minister be proud of a budget that ignores the demographic shift—to ensure that our seniors have the care they require?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I could not disagree more with the premise of the question. This is a budget that is absolutely forward-looking, that is actually investing in health care. We are not cutting; we are building. What we are doing is very much focusing on the challenges that the member opposite has raised.

The issue of ALC in our hospitals is a serious issue, and one that we are addressing very successfully. Let me just give you one example. The Toronto Central local health integration network, under the leadership of Camille Orridge, has identified those ALC patients who are long-stay ALC, and they are developing an individualized plan for each one of those people to get them out of the hospital and into the community. Our budget supports that kind of innovation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: I disagree with the praise that the minister is laying on her track record.

The system of elderly care is broken. It starts with our home care system, which has been sold out to the lowest bidder, and goes right through to your government's deeply flawed plan for retirement homes.

Increases to funding are important, but unless you fix the broken system, the same problems will continue. When will the minister be ready to address the problems and take a good look at her increasingly broken health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I completely reject the notion that our health care system is broken. It is much, much stronger than it was when we took office, and we are working to make it even stronger.

One of the things we really need to invest in, and that this budget does invest in, is the community sector. Let me tell you another story about a program from John Gerretsen's Central East LHIN. I attended, with Minister Gerretsen, a program called OASIS. It provides care right in the building where a number of seniors live. As a result of this program, three members of this club have removed their names from the wait-list for long-term care. The number of calls to 911 for ambulance services has been greatly reduced. This is the kind of community investment that we are making right—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Bill Mauro: This question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, with the recession that has affected many Ontarians, a number of people are returning to school to increase their level of education or train for a new skilled trade. More and more Ontarians recognize that it is imperative they have the skills and education to compete for the best jobs. Many reports suggest that seven out of every 10 new jobs will require post-secondary education or training in the next decade.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I've met with students attending Lakehead University and seen Lakehead grow considerably over the years, as more and more students recognize the quality of education they can receive. These young Ontarians are our future; they're the next generation who will support and contribute to our economy.

Minister, how is our budget helping these students to continue with their studies and get the education that they need?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very, very proud of our government's commitment to post-secondary education and the literally billions of dollars that have been invested over the past number of years. To take one example, Lakehead University, in the member's community, has seen an increase in its operating budget of 81% under our watch, and of course, yesterday there was the great news in the budget that we will be funding an additional 60,000 spots over the next five years.

There are those on the other side of the House in the Conservative Party who have criticized this announcement. They refuse to tell us their plan on post-secondary education. They refuse to remind people that they cut $430 million out of PSE when they were in office. They say that those spaces would happen anyway. They might happen under their watch, but we know they wouldn't fund them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Oakville is one of the fastest-growing communities in all of Ontario. It's also home to one of the greatest colleges in the world: Sheridan College. Sheridan offers top-notch programs. One of the best programs is a bachelor of arts in animation. It's referred to as "the Harvard of animation." Animation degree students come from all over the world. Once they graduate, they go and work for great companies like Pixar and DreamWorks. We've got close to 14,000

students at Sheridan. They keep growing. I want to make sure that growth continues.

Minister, we can't go back to the PC days. Students saw their tuition fees increase by 67%. At the same time, financial aid assistance decreased by 41%. Will the minister tell us what the government is doing to assist the increased number of students expected at all our colleges over the next few years?

Hon. John Milloy: As I say, I was very proud of yesterday's announcement that we will be providing funding to support an additional 60,000 students at the province's colleges and universities.

I applaud the member for his support for post-secondary education. He mentioned Sheridan College, which has seen their funding increase by 69% since 2003. In addition, we have spent over $3 billion since we came to office to increase infrastructure investments at our colleges and universities and create tens of thousands of spaces. Moving forward, we're going to continue to work with all our institutions, including ones like Sheridan, to make sure that we have the agreements and the understanding so that this growth happens in a way that is smart and happens in a way that is in the best interests for Ontario students.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, on May 18 last year, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act received royal assent after getting all-party support in this House. This legislation was supposed to help thousands of public employees merge their pension assets so they that could retire with the benefits they have paid for. The list of employees ranged from paramedics and social service workers to property assessors and thousands of others affected by past divestments. Unfortunately for the people affected, you seem to have completely ignored the bill since it was passed and have failed to introduce the necessary regulations.

Minister, why are you ruining the retirement future of thousands of Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, I'd like to thank all members of the Legislature for supporting the legislation. We had two major pieces of pension legislation pass unanimously, and I think that speaks to the good work we can do.

The member is accurate. The regulations have not been promulgated yet. The regulations under pension legislation are very complex and difficult. We are engaged in a range of consultations with management and with labour, and I'm confident that once we get a consensus there, we'll be able to bring forward the regulations.

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In the interim, I'm pleased to report that the situation of pensions, both in the public and private sectors in Ontario, has improved dramatically in the last year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have introduced and debated a private member's bill on this issue; tabled hundreds of petitions, as have my colleagues; written the minister on several occasions, and the Premier; and even asked for meetings for my constituents. Each time, the government either skirts the issue or says no. Whether it's OMERS, the healthcare of Ontario pension plan, or the OPSEU pension trust, they all supported this bill and have been calling for it for years. The government's own Expert Commission on Pensions said, "The government should promptly address the pension arrangements for groups of public service employees affected by past divestments and transfers."

Waiting for resolution for years does not count as moving promptly. I ask the minister again: When will he introduce the regulations to allow these honest and hard-working paramedics and public sector workers to retire with the benefits they have earned in their pensions?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Those regulations will be promulgated shortly. We have been working with them. That particular regulation is at the top of the list. In fact, the regulations will likely take us back to the date of passage of the legislation.

What they do remember is that when the Conservatives were in office, they brought forward pension legislation that completely ignored the requests of the labour side of the table in these things. They were forced to withdraw two bills—two bills. Bill 198: I remember it well in this House, because it was all about undermining working people's pensions and pensions in the broader public sector.

This party's record is strong. This party's record is about a better future for all Ontarians.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the finance minister. Minister, your budget yesterday had nothing new for northern Ontario. What it did have, however, was a 7.3% cut to the budget of the Ministry of Natural Resources and a 3.2% cut to the budget of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

Families in the north were expecting a budget that would address the loss of value-added jobs, the higher cost of living and the soaring electricity rates that people in the north are facing. But instead of action, they got the same old tired rhetoric. Why did the McGuinty Liberals completely ignore northern Ontario in yesterday's budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased that yesterday we fulfilled our commitment to raise the northern Ontario heritage fund to $100 million. Now, a little history lesson. My northern colleagues reliably inform me that when she was part of a government, they cut the northern Ontario heritage fund by $60 million.

Let's talk about last year's budget, which that member voted against. When we created the northern industrial energy policy, they didn't support it. When we provided funding to get the Ring of Fire, which I think has the

most opportunity to help northern Ontario grow and prosper, she voted against it. When we created a tax package to create jobs in the north, which was supported by the mining and by the forestry sectors, she voted against it.

We've got a good plan for all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Not only has this government stood silent while the cost of everyday life got more and more expensive and good, value-added jobs left the north—40,000 forestry workers, as a matter of fact, have lost their jobs in northern Ontario since 2003; in the last year alone, in the northwest, 11,000 jobs gone. But instead of confronting these challenges, you stick with a strategy that's been failing the north for years.

Finance Minister, I would like to know: Is the 2011 budget an admission that your government has given up on northern Ontario completely?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: All right, let's see. The northern Ontario energy tax credit, $200 per family: She voted against it. Some $1 billion in support to the forestry industry: She says it didn't work. The northern Ontario heritage fund I spoke about, $100 million: They cut $60 million. It supports 15,000 jobs. The new northern industrial hydro rate, $150 million annually to keep prices competitive: She didn't support that. The $1.8 billion northern Ontario highway strategy, 900 kilometres of roadbed: She didn't support any of it.

This is the party that stands up for northern Ontario. That's why we have members in Thunder Bay, in Sudbury, in Timiskaming and North Bay. That's why northerners know who they can trust. It's a Dalton McGuinty Liberal government that has delivered a better future for their children and grandchildren in northern Ontario.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS STRATEGY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I had the opportunity to sit as a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and for 18 months we worked to develop 23 recommendations founded in the need to develop better mental health and addictions care. In yesterday's budget, the Minister of Finance confirmed our government's commitment to a mental health and addictions strategy. He spoke specifically to children's mental health.

As a grandmother, I see how brutal today's world can be for children and how their mental state can be bombarded by things that even adults can't always protect them from. I'm a firm believer in early intervention and the long-term benefits of such intervention.

Could the minister please give the House more information about how children's mental health and addictions will be impacted by yesterday's budget?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you to the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for her question, and I commend her on her advocacy on this important issue. She and all of my colleagues, along with the many voices of so many advocates, have worked to ensure that kids with mental health difficulties in her community and across the province get the help that they need as close to home as possible.

Yesterday was an important day for Ontario families. Our finance minister committed to strengthening services for children's mental health with an immediate funding infusion, which will continue to grow over the next three years. Children's Mental Health Ontario, Parents for Children's Mental Health, children's mental health agencies across the province and their dedicated front-line staff who help children tackle challenges every day and get on a path to success: We have listened to you and are responding to the needs in our communities.

As the budget laid out, significant funding will begin to flow. We will focus on services as close to home as possible, on early intervention, on early identification and getting services quickly. That is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Yesterday's budget presentation speaks extensively to our commitment to mental health and addictions services for children and youth. But in the hearings by the select committee, we saw how very complex and diverse mental health and addictions can be.

Going beyond the benefits of early intervention for children, we know that there are people in this province who are also looking for support for their own mental health and addictions needs. Could the minister please address the concerns of all Ontarians?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the members of this Legislature that the McGuinty government is committed to providing better support for all Ontarians struggling with mental health and addictions issues. The province's 10-year mental health and addictions strategy, which we will release very soon, will do just that. We know that mental health is a very important factor in overall health, and while the first three years of our strategy will focus on children and youth, our strategy will address the entire system. We will address issues such as stigma, better system navigation and taking a better patient-centred approach to the delivery of care and services.

Yesterday's commitment represents a very important step forward, but it is just the beginning. The executive director of Children's Mental Health Ontario said that these investments are going to help thousands and thousands of kids who are struggling with mental health and addictions. These investments will help families and children. It will also put Ontario in the lead when it comes to mental health and addictions.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Last May, the minister told his con-

stituents in Wellington county that if a municipality did not sign off on a wind energy application, the government would not approve the project. He later backtracked, saying that the municipality must only be consulted, but he added that the proponents still had to submit a complete application.

Last week, the Wellington Advertiser reported that the county of Wellington and the township of Mapleton have refused to submit the municipal consultation form on a wind farm proposal in Mapleton township. The minister used to say that a complete application requires the municipal consultation form, but now we find out that the government accepted the application nine days before the county of Wellington even took its stand.

Why did the minister accept the application even though the municipal consultation form was glaring in its omission?

1130

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to answer the question. We have been very clear to our municipalities that though we have the final say, we will say no unless the municipalities have been consulted.

I want to thank the county of Wellington for writing me and expressing to me, as the Minister of the Environment, their concerns about the project. So they have been consulted; they are providing us the feedback. That's exactly how the Green Energy Act is going to work.

If they choose that they do not want to fill in the form that the proponent requires them to complete, then we'll just listen directly to the municipality. That's why we want to listen directly to the public and that's why they keep on providing that to us.

But I guess the question that I have for the member opposite is: Does he agree with the lung society? Does he agree with the asthma society; does he agree with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; does he agree with the Ontario College of Family Physicians, who all say that it's important that we get out of coal, that we go to green, renewable sources of energy? That's what's important—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: People in Wellington county are wondering if they can believe this minister anymore. I would submit that they can't.

Hansard quotes—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw.

Hansard quotes the minister last October: "There will not be an approval of a renewable energy approval in this province of Ontario unless an application is complete." The minister used to say that an application would not be complete without the municipal consultation form. The county of Wellington and the township of Mapleton are making a statement based on the minister's assurance that they would have a say, but people in Wellington county were mistaken if they believed him. The minister's own constituents feel deceived.

Why is he allowing the wind farm application in his own riding to go around his own approval process? Why is he accepting an incomplete application when he promised he wouldn't?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the member opposite, and I'll just repeat: The county of Wellington has been consulted and they have shared their concerns with me.

The renewable energy approval and the Green Energy Act are all about ensuring that the public and municipalities have their say. But in this province, it's the province of Ontario, under the Green Energy Act, that has the final say, because we're the only level of government that has the ability to shut down a wind turbine if it's too noisy. The people of Ontario have a right to clean air, but we all have a right to a good night's sleep. And it's the province, not the municipality, that should be dealing with wind turbine companies. That's why we have final say, but as I said, we will say no unless the municipality and the public have their say.

I want to thank the county of Wellington for writing me personally and sharing with me their concerns. We take those concerns very, very seriously, and we want to thank them for ensuring that we have all the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the finance minister. The word "poverty" was not mentioned once in the budget speech. There was not a single significant new measure to address poverty in this budget. Why has the government abandoned totally its poverty reduction strategy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased that in the budget yesterday, we could raise transfers for OW and ODSP. I am pleased that we are continuing to implement the Ontario child benefit, which benefits families of more modest means. I am pleased that we now have the lowest tax rate on the first $37,000 of income.

I'm very proud of the fact that we've taken 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls. I'm very proud of our anti-poverty strategy, which, for the first time, identified the real measurements of poverty. I am proud that we promised to raise the minimum wage to $10.25 and we have done that. I am proud of a variety of investments we've made in the education and health care system. And I'm very proud of our initiative yesterday with respect to children's mental health and addictions, which I would submit does in fact help children from more modest income brackets here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This government promised to reduce poverty 25% in five years, and you are way behind target. Yesterday did not help at all.

Food bank use, waiting lists for affordable housing and child poverty are all increasing in Ontario. This budget has no increase to the minimum wage. It has no increase to the child benefit. It has no new food or hous-

ing benefits mentioned at all. There is no new money for affordable housing. There is no new money for child care.

Why has this government abandoned its commitment to poverty reduction? Don't talk about the past. Talk about now.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm glad he's asking for an increase in the child benefit because he voted against it on numerous occasions. There they go again: cheap, empty rhetoric that does not reflect reality.

He failed to mention the Trillium benefit which is contained in yesterday's budget. Here is what a social policy expert said: He praised the new Trillium benefit as "the beginning of a ... base benefit outside the welfare system for single people" that will work to help eliminate poverty.

You know what? He didn't say that at a $500-a-plate dinner at Barberian's, which the NDP do routinely, a week after they follow the welfare diet.

You have no concept. You're not stating the facts. We have the most aggressive and successful policy designed to reduce poverty in Ontario history.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Sue Storr and Dave Burgess, in the west members' gallery, from CHOK radio in Sarnia, who conducted their talk show from Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION LABOUR DISPUTES RESOLUTION ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÈGLEMENT DES CONFLITS DE TRAVAIL À LA COMMISSION DE TRANSPORT DE TORONTO

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission / Projet de loi 150, Loi prévoyant le règlement des conflits de travail à la Commission de transport de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission. Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 150. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Elliott, Christine	Milloy, John
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Munro, Julia
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Orazietti, David
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Pendergast, Leeanna
Best, Margarett	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Clark, Steve	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	MacLeod, Lisa	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilkinson, John
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mauro, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Miller, Paul
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Gélinas, France	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 68; the nays are 9.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Community Safety and the member from Hamilton East, take it outside.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? I heard a no.

Members will please take their seats.

Mr. Bradley has moved second reading of Bill 163. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul
Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John
Arthurs, Wayne	Gélinas, France	Mitchell, Carol
Bailey, Robert	Gravelle, Michael	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hillier, Randy	Orazietti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Best, Margarett	Hoskins, Eric	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bisson, Gilles	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Carroll, Aileen	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Kormos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Tabuns, Peter
Crozier, Bruce	MacLeod, Lisa	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Marchese, Rosario	Van Bommel, Maria
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Matthews, Deborah	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 78; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington–Halton Hills has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning wind farm approvals. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to welcome to the chamber today some long-time viewers but first-time visitors. I've got Cassandra Edwards from Greely, Kayla Fernet from Craig Henry, and Ashley Croke from Barrhaven. They're with my assistant, Meg, and they all work and do great things for the people of Nepean–Carleton. I'm really excited that they're actually in the chamber here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We welcome you. I think you will experience today, and I say this to all our viewers at home, that it is one thing to watch us on television or watch us via live streaming on the Internet, but it is quite another experience to come and visit the Legislative Assembly here in downtown Toronto and witness the action first-hand. You will see things and you will hear things that you would not generally pick up on the television. So we welcome you to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTHY BABIES, HEALTHY CHILDREN

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about a program that has received widespread critical acclaim from health professionals and families throughout the province of Ontario. This program has provided a very strong and vigorous start to life for tens of thousands of newborn babies. Regrettably, this program is now suffering from a lack of funding under the Liberal government.

The program I speak of is Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. I was health minister when our government made a commitment to ensure that each and every newborn baby in this province and their parents would receive the support and resources required to start life on a healthy and solid footing. We provided that a public health nurse would visit all new mothers and babies in order to determine if that family and that baby might require some support. Our government made unparalleled investments in this postnatal program, increasing its funding every year as the population increased, as did the need.

Unfortunately, the McGuinty government has now broken this commitment to babies, children and their families. They have turned their back on them by not providing sufficient funding in recent months and years. The Waterloo Record states, "The province's inability" to fund this program "raises questions about the government's priorities."

I agree. Why is this government not making the funding available—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TEAM 2056, ORCHARD PARK ROBOTICS

Mr. Paul Miller: Today, I'm proud of the stellar work of Orchard Park Secondary School's robotics team from my Hamilton East–Stoney Creek riding. The team, which goes by the name of 2056, has kicked off its upcoming season with its ninth straight championship win at the tournament held in Rochester, New York. The team

placed first out of 44 teams from Ontario and the north-eastern United States. The Rochester win takes the students to the upcoming world championships in St. Louis.

It's a privilege to congratulate the students, the school, the parents and the teachers for their success, hard work and dedication. Orchard Park's robotics team has shown what students can accomplish when they work hard and are encouraged to their full potential, success that is often the case in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

I encourage any individuals or businesses to support such a wonderful organization. Visit the robotics team website, www.2056.ca, for information on how to get involved or to make a donation.

I wish continued success to these students when they travel to the world championships later this spring. They'll make Stoney Creek, Hamilton, Ontario and Canada very proud.

SNOWMOBILING

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'd like to report to the House on my annual Snow Tour. The first ride began, Mr. Speaker, as you know, in the year 2000 and has hosted over 30 different members who have snowmobiled at least 4,000 kilometres over the years, from Manitouwadge to Chapleau, from Dubreuilville to Elliot Lake, and a host of other communities.

This year I was accompanied by the members from Scarborough–Agincourt, Ajax–Pickering and Oakville.

This year the ride began on St. Joseph Island with a wonderful breakfast featuring famous St. Joseph Island maple syrup. It was hosted by Ches Wallace and the fine volunteers at the Legion in Richards Landing. Then we were off, leaving from Jack Hore's house at Hilton Beach, for lunch in Thessalon and a tour of the new construction at Algoma Manor. A big thanks to Donna Latulippe and the fine staff at the manor.

After lunch we were off to Elliot Lake, with a quick stop for fuel at Ted Linley's Country Store in Iron Bridge before heading to Elliot Lake. Thank you to the Hampton Inn and Elliott Lake for their hospitality and Jack Quinte of Oliver's for a superb dinner.

The next day we returned to the Hilton on St. Joseph Island for a time of refreshment and trail tales. Special thanks to Jack Hore, Bruce McNeely and Mark MacKinnon of the Algoma Snow Plan, the OPP officers, Dave Liske of the STOP program, Deputy Mayor Al Collette of Elliot Lake, Tim West of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, the Bruce Mines Sno Glyders and Gerry Bertrand of the Elliot Lake Snowbirds for their hard work on the trails. I want to recognize especially Luc Levesque and Rejean Raymond, who have been on almost all of my snowmobile trips. We couldn't get on without them. Thank you.

TWESTIVAL OTTAWA

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to deliver a statement today on behalf of not only myself but my colleague from Ottawa Centre, Yasir Naqvi, about a great event that he and I were able to attend last Thursday in the city of Ottawa. It was called Twestival, and 250 of our community friends and neighbours got together over Twitter. Over 150 communities across the world got together from places like Canada, Italy and Australia to raise a combined total of $500,000 for charities in their community.

My colleague Mr. Naqvi and I attended an event in Ottawa which hosted 250 people and raised over $13,000 for mental health awareness and treatment in the city of Ottawa through the Royal Ottawa Hospital and Do It For Daron and that great cause. Mr. Naqvi and myself would like to thank the tremendous supporters of that event, not only the organizers but the communities.

Mr. Speaker, I've got great news for you. Not one cent of that $13,000 that was raised went to the event. All of it went to children's mental health, adult mental health and treatment in our community. The ticket price 100% went to that good work.

I want to say thank you to all my colleagues in the Legislature for congratulating the great efforts of the people of Twestival Ottawa. May they do this again, and may we be there with them.

COBOURG COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's my privilege to share some great news from my riding. On April 16 we'll be celebrating the official opening of the Cobourg Community Centre. Our provincial government made an investment of over $9 million through the infrastructure stimulus fund to see this project come to fruition. Not only is this funding an investment in good, solid infrastructure that will be here for years to come, but the construction of this facility created hundreds of jobs—local jobs that had workers employed seven days a week, 24 hours a day. I'm proud that this community had the opportunity and the forethought to hire local companies to provide services to keep workers and these jobs right here at home.

Some of the local service providers are Battlefield Equipment Rentals, Blake Construction, Carpenters Local 397, Cogeco, Cressman Tree Maintenance and Landscaping Ltd., Culligan The Good Water Company, Don on the Job, FedEx, Kelly Excavating, L.A. Signs, Labour Local 183, Lafarge Canada Inc., Lakefront Utility Services Inc., Lakeland Multitrade, Ontario Line Clearing, Plumbers Union Local 463, Portable Food Service Truck, PraxAir Inc., Rent All and RONA Building Supplies. This is just one of those infrastructure investments that was good all the way around.

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. John O'Toole: This afternoon I want to give a little advice to little Caesar, the finance minister: some wise words from some very respected people whom I know he knows.

1510

First, a piece of advice from former federal deputy finance minister—Paul Martin's deputy—and recent blue ribbon appointee Don Drummond, whom this morning Minister Duncan called "one of Canada's most respected economists" and said he looked forward to hearing his recommendations. Mr. Drummond said the deficit is "a lot higher than people are thinking and it's a graphic illustration to me that there is a structural deficit in Ontario." That's from Mr. Drummond.

Former federal Finance Minister John Manley recently said, "The single most important thing you could do to secure the future of" Ontario "is to rally your caucus and the population of Ontario behind a declaration of war … I am proposing a war on the provincial debt, before it is too late."

Lastly, the words of former Finance Minister Paul Martin before the 1995 austerity budget that he championed—and one of the best finance ministers ever in Canada: "The debt and deficit are not inventions of ideology. They are facts of arithmetic.... The only thing Canadians want is clear action," which is missing here today.

These experts and Liberals are all saying the same thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

LAKE SUPERIOR CENTRE FOR REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

Mr. Bill Mauro: For decades, people in Thunder Bay have hoped for more diversification of their economy to create more opportunities for young people so they could stay at home.

Over the last seven years, our government has played a significant role in making that very thing happen. Just last week, I was very proud to be part of another great announcement in Thunder Bay. It's news that will enhance health outcomes, expand our knowledge-based sector and further diversify our economy, creating more jobs and opportunity for young people.

Lake Superior Centre for Regenerative Medicine has now been designated as a type D facility, a tissue and bone bank, by the Trillium Gift of Life Network. This designation will allow Lake Superior Centre for Regenerative Medicine to create a local donor recovery program to access and process tissue and bone.

This program will result in an increased supply of tissue and bone, which will greatly enhance patient health outcomes and reduce the reliance on tissue imported from America. The designation will also allow this company to move forward to hire 30 employees with the potential for so many more.

I need to thank my old friend Bob Thayer, Judy Sander and the board of this organization, who have persevered on this issue. They are at the forefront of an economic transformation taking place in Thunder Bay.

With our government support, another health and knowledge company in the northwest is now positioned for future growth. The diversification of our economy is definitely moving forward. That will mean more knowledge-based jobs and more jobs for young people.

DUDLEY LAWS

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today in the provincial Legislature to pay tribute to Dudley Laws, who passed away last week.

Dudley was a tireless, fearless and most unforgettable voice of equality for all Torontonians, no matter what their ethnic origin. For 50 years, Dudley Laws fought for social justice, not only within the black community but for all communities that needed help. Whether you were a domestic worker, in the prison system, a refugee or a new immigrant, Dudley was there. In fact, two weeks before he was taken seriously ill with kidney disease, he spent time in Joyceville prison celebrating Black History Month with some of the black inmates.

Dudley was a proud son of Jamaica, a proud Canadian and a welder by trade, and always believed in getting young people to learn a trade so they would be able to do something with their lives and be productive.

Dudley was completely generous to a fault. He was an incredible advocate. He was a neighbour of mine for many years, a friend and, as I say, a constant, tireless advocate for those who needed help.

Dudley Laws is going to be missed by his family and friends. He was a great shining light in the most difficult and controversial of times, but Dudley was a fearless fighter for what he thought was right. Many people on Dufferin today will tell you, when you ask them about Dudley Laws, "Dudley Laws speaks for me."

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Yesterday, Ontarians were happy to hear the finance minister tell this House that Ontario is turning the corner to a better tomorrow. Our plan is working, the economy is improving and jobs are coming back.

The 2011 budget is the next step. It contains new strategic investments which will create and retain nearly 10,000 jobs, add more than 60,000 post-secondary spaces, expand breast cancer screening, improve children's mental health services and help our farmers. At the same time, we are diligently working to eliminate the deficit. The 2010-11 deficit is now projected to be $3 billion lower than it was forecast to be one year ago. We have also identified savings of nearly $1.5 billion across government over the next three fiscal years. All this while protecting education, health care and economic growth. We are building a strong economy that creates jobs.

The PCs oppose our plan. They're against creating 600,000 jobs, against cutting taxes for families by over $12 billion and against cutting taxes for businesses by $4.8 billion. The Leader of the Opposition didn't even support the infrastructure investments that brought 4,500 jobs to his own community. He's more interested in laying off over—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Rick Johnson: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendment:

Bill Pr36, An Act to revive 1314596 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of contravening the rules of the road and causing death / Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les contraventions aux règles de la circulation et le fait de causer la mort d'une personne.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Prue: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to make it an offence to cause the death of or bodily harm to any person as a result of contravening any rule of the road set out in part X of the act.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list dated March 9, 2011, for private members' public business: Mr. Dickson and Mr. Brown exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Dickson assumes ballot item number 10 and Mr. Brown assumes ballot item number 75; and Mr. Brownell and Mr. Kwinter exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Brownell assumes ballot item number 15 and Mr. Kwinter assumes ballot item number 58.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that ballot item number 78 on the order of precedence, dated March 4, 2010, previously standing in the name of Mr. Fonseca, shall lapse and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(e), the Speaker shall put the questions on the two remaining ballot items to be considered during private members' public business on Thursday, April 7, 2011, after the conclusion of debate on ballot item number 77.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ADDRESS BY AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding an address to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, following motions on Thursday, April 7, 2011, the Speaker shall adjourn the House during pleasure for the purpose of

permitting an address to the House by His Excellency Kaoru Ishikawa, the ambassador of Japan to Canada; and

That up to five minutes be allotted to a representative of each of the three parties in the House for remarks in reply, and

That, following these proceedings, the Speaker shall resume the chair and call statements by the ministry and responses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee travel.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the permanent members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the 32nd annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Last week, the first 2011 volunteer service awards ceremony took place in Stratford. This was the first of 48 ceremonies in 35 different communities that will take place over the next three months. Together, these events recognize more than 10,000 unsung Ontario heroes who have volunteered their time and their talents to support not-for-profit and charitable organizations.

This year also marks the 25th anniversary of Ontario's volunteer service awards. Since 1986, more than 150,000 women, men and youth have been recognized for their outstanding volunteer contributions.

By shining a spotlight on these exceptional Ontarians, we also recognize all volunteers whose efforts build and maintain the foundation for our compassionate and caring society—Ontarians such as Listowel volunteer firefighters Raymond Walter and Kenneth Rea. Two weeks ago, these two men tragically lost their lives as they selflessly volunteered to protect their communities. They risked their own lives to keep us safe, and we honour their service and their memory.

Volunteers strengthen our communities in so many different ways. They welcome new Canadians and make them feel at home here in Ontario. They advocate for people with disabilities, coach kids' sports teams, organize festivals, protect the environment, raise funds and advance many other worthy causes.

Today more than five million Ontarians volunteer their time and their talents to make our communities better places to live. Collectively, Ontarians volunteer more than 800 million hours annually, valued at $10 billion in donated time.

Last year I had the privilege of attending a number of volunteer service awards ceremonies, and at these ceremonies I learned about the positive contributions Ontarians are making each and every day. I was inspired by their stories of dedication and service. I know that many members of the Legislature have had similar experiences when attending these awards ceremonies in their own communities.

Without a doubt, volunteers are the heart of our communities. They are our community builders and our community leaders. They express our values and define who we are, both as a province and as a people.

What makes our volunteers stand out is that they expect absolutely no reward for their generosity. They generously give themselves, their time and their talents to serve others.

The volunteer service awards are the cornerstone of Ontario's recognition program. They are our thank-you to Ontarians for their dedication. By celebrating the positive impact that volunteers have in making our province a better place, we encourage more people to follow their inspiring examples.

The 25th anniversary of the awards is an occasion for us to honour our volunteers and to reflect on the society that they have helped create, but it is also an occasion to look ahead. It's an opportunity to recognize that the role of volunteers will remain just as critical to the next quarter-century as it was to the last, and it is a time to renew our commitment to Ontario's proud tradition of volunteerism.

This is what the McGuinty government is doing through the Partnership Project, our new strategy to strengthen the government's partnership with the not-for-profit sector. To help guide the strategy, we are creating the partnership advisory group, which will include leaders from the not-for-profit, public and private sectors. We are also establishing the Partnership Project office to help renew, streamline and modernize the government's relationship with community organizations and provide better coordination. This is in addition to the roughly 70 projects we have previously launched to help our not-for-profit organizations attract volunteers, improve their operations and manage risks.

I'm confident that all members of the Legislature share our vision of keeping Ontario's volunteer spirit burning brightly and will join me in thanking our volunteers for their outstanding community service.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm very proud, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to speak about the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. Every year these awards ceremonies recognize thousands of people

at events held across Ontario. These presentations provide a richly deserved moment in the spotlight for those otherwise unheralded folks in our communities who willingly give up so much time and talent to make our life better.

Imagine for a moment just how many things families cherish about living in the villages, towns and cities in every corner of our province that would disappear without the remarkable contributions of Ontario's eight million volunteers. If not for the men and women who volunteer, who would be the coach of our sports teams, help teachers in schools, stock shelves in the local food banks, comfort a lonely senior or organize fundraisers that are so necessary to close the gaps in our social safety net? We all know the answer: No one.

I'm thinking right now about the members of the North Augusta recreation committee, whom I met with last Saturday afternoon. We spent the day in the village's community hall, signing up youngsters for summer sports programs. But their work didn't end on Saturday afternoon; that was only the beginning. Now they'll take those sign-up lists and put together the teams; they'll organize the schedule, offer to coach, and officiate at the games. Thanks to these volunteers, more than 150 kids will enjoy experiences they will remember for a lifetime while playing soccer and baseball this summer.

I would like to thank the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for his strong support of the volunteer service awards. Although we know volunteers like the ones I met in North Augusta last weekend don't get involved for recognition, we should never take their vital contributions for granted. We owe it to them to say thank you not only for a job well done but to provide them with the acknowledgment that lets them know their efforts are appreciated and that we want them to stay involved.

This year, as the minister said, marks the 25th anniversary of the volunteer service awards program. I think it's important that we capitalize on this special occasion. I believe the milestone anniversary is a great opportunity to use this year's awards ceremonies to encourage and recruit even more Ontarians to become active citizens.

I had the great honour to attend my first volunteer awards ceremony as an MPP last June in Kingston. It was an incredibly humbling experience to meet these people from my riding, who joined over 150,000 people recognized through the program since its inception in 1986. I knew many of the people whom I met when I travelled to Kingston because I've seen them working around Leeds and Grenville as I travel in my duties. But I have to admit, I didn't grasp the enormity of their contributions until I saw them there that day and heard from them how involved and how integral they are to their communities.

Like many of my colleagues here at Queen's Park, I have been an active volunteer in my community—I take pride in that—but attending last year's volunteer service awards ceremony inspired me. That's why I feel so strongly that every MPP in this House should attend their local ceremony and then make it their mission to tell anyone who will listen about the difference volunteers make in their community. On this, the silver anniversary of the volunteer service awards, let's use our voices to help inspire others to step forward and show the same commitment to community that we're recognizing for this program in the coming months. Let's recruit more people of all ages, all walks of life and all backgrounds to get involved and bolster the ranks of Ontario's volunteer army. If we can do that, I'm confident that we'll build a stronger, more vibrant province for the people we're elected to represent.

1530

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Of course it's a moment of honour to rise and salute the volunteers across the province of Ontario, but there's a problem. There's a problem, and many of them have asked me to bring a message to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It's a message of some import, and I hope he listens, because I believe he's a good man at heart.

Right now in the province of Ontario, volunteers are not only doing the traditional work of volunteers; they're actually doing the work of government. Right now in the province of Ontario, we have a situation where child poverty is higher than it's ever been since the Great Depression; where we've seen a government slash the housing budget 20% over the last two years, and 142,000 families wait for affordable housing; where this government, much to the contrary of their spin, is on track to raising the poverty rates 25% in five years. This is the backdrop to the good work of volunteers in the province.

What are they doing? This is what they're doing: They're providing the housing that government doesn't. They're providing the food that government doesn't. They're providing the jobs, at times, that government doesn't. They're providing the nursing and the care staff in our hospitals and our senior homes that government doesn't. And they're getting very, very, very tired. In fact, as a United Church minister, having worked with the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, with our volunteers and also the volunteers from the Anglican church, who were, by the way, across the street demanding that this government feed those on social assistance and not slash the special diet allowance—which of course they have—those volunteers are saying to this government, "Enough." They're saying, "Enough." They're saying, "Do the job that's yours to do. Don't do it on our backs."

In terms of non-profits, here is the situation: Most of the non-profits in my riding I speak to spend a third of their time writing grant proposals. That's not their job. They want to be on the front lines, dealing with the problems that they're tasked to do, but that's what this government requires of them. They don't get stable funding.

Victim services, the very front-line group that deals with women in violent situations, victims of domestic violence, works profoundly with volunteers. In fact, they couldn't do their jobs without volunteers. They didn't get one extra dollar from this government, and they haven't had a raise in decades. This is unconscionable. This can't go on.

Out of the Cold volunteers have been doing this year in, year out, and churches are tired. They're running out of funds. They're running out of volunteers.

The volunteers who work in our hospitals and seniors' homes: When they wake up and read the sunshine list and find out that their CEOs are making sometimes $4 million, $5 million, $6 million a year while they, the seniors, are actually doing the work on the ground, they're even more tired. And they call on this government: Do the right thing. Do what you're supposed to do. Step up. Do the job of government. The job of government should not be given over to charity, and that's the situation we live in right now in Ontario, unfortunately.

So while we applaud—of course we do—the tireless work of volunteers, we say, "Give them a break." You can't count on them to deliver the job of government. They cannot and should not be asked to do the work that government should be doing, and that's the situation. It can't last; it won't last. People are exhausted, institutions are exhausted and non-profits are exhausted.

So what I say to the McGuinty Liberals and to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is: If you really want to help our volunteers, respond to that challenge. Step up, provide housing and make it possible to close the food banks. It's obscene that we have food banks. That's the direction this government should go in. That's what volunteers really want. That's the reward that really will pay them for all their long and tireless hours of dedication.

PETITIONS

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to read a petition. I was hoping the Minister of the Environment would be here; He is here, he's just not in the House at the moment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You know better than that.

Mr. John O'Toole: He'll follow up, I'm sure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Read the petition.

Mr. John O'Toole: "Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and" in fact "a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium" first "on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent" further "contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine," specifically on Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road in my riding of Durham.

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Kiruthika, one of the pages.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that was given to me by Denis Theriault from the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association, Local 51, and the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers, Local 95. It reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sydney to bring it to the Clerk.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Rick Johnson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with the petition, I sign it and I present it to the page.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones's Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings."

For obvious reasons, I support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Travis to take to the table.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tenants living in Toronto community housing deserve to be treated with dignity and respect by all levels of government; and

"Whereas tenants have fears that their homes may be sold and the services to maintain those homes privatized to the lowest bidder;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the government of Ontario do all things necessary to halt the privatization and sale of the homes in which we live; and further,

"That meaningful consultations take place between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the affected tenants to ensure that our voice is heard and our interest protected in this vital area of public housing."

It's signed by a number of people. I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

1540

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from some of my constituents from the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville:

"We, the undersigned, are concerned about the overcrowding at our two neighbourhood Catholic schools—namely at St. Brigid and St. Mark—and the growing number of portables being used to house Stouffville Catholic students.

"The introduction of full-day kindergarten at St. Mark next year will also further exacerbate the lack of classroom space and overcrowding.

"We need another Catholic elementary school in Stouffville. Another Catholic school will mean better places for all our children to learn, grow and thrive, and to reach their full potential.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in a new Catholic school in Stouffville."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with Sydney.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I'll affix my signature. I agree with the petition and I'll send it to the table with page Jimmy.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition certified by the Clerk and addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric

of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I've affixed my signature as well.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to read a petition given to me by Bernice Hall, a paramedic, in support of Maria Van Bommel's private member's Bill 115. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition. I'll give it to Madelaine.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

As I've affixed my signature, I am in agreement. I'm giving it to page Fatemah.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have these petitions, which have been presented to me by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Districts 27 and 11, the Service Employees International Union, Local 1, as well as OPSEU. It reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore, we ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Kiruthika to bring it to the Clerk.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have a petition today from an outstanding person, Gwen Lamoureux, who lives in Strathroy, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Logan.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to save Duntroon Central Public School and all other rural schools in Clearview township:

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for is high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty"—I should say "Premier McGuinty"—"promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found $12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto schools but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that has been presented to me by Denis Theriault from SMWIA, Local 51, Madam Louisette Roy de Hearst et Madam Denise Aubin de Nickel Belt. It reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;"

They ask the Legislative Assembly "to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I support the petition and will ask the page to bring it to the Clerk.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this and will sign it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: This afternoon I have another petition from Vincent Arnold from Mount Brydges, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

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"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Grace.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 29, 2011, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus this afternoon, and should the McGuinty government choose to table an actual budget this year, I'd be pleased to respond to that as well.

Sadly, the document this government released yesterday is no more than a work of fiction. Ontario families, after seven years of McGuinty government broken promises, McGuinty government higher taxes and runaway spending, simply don't believe the words in the

budget pages, and neither do we on this side of the House.

What was truly remarkable was that the finance minister chose to focus more of his time and energy attacking the official opposition yesterday than he dedicated to the interests of the province of Ontario. He spent more time attacking the official opposition than he did talking about bringing relief to hard-working Ontario families struggling today to make ends meet.

What has become clear is that this government will say anything that they believe will help them get re-elected. However, they don't want to talk about their own record. They had absolutely no ideas on how to give average families a break.

We actually saw a continuation of the pattern since this government has come to power: Program spending has increased a staggering 77% while Ontario's economy grew by only 9%, a rate more than eight times as fast. You can't run your house that way, you can't run your business that way, and we can no longer continue to run the province of Ontario that way.

Because of this remarkable increase in program spending, the runaway spending of the McGuinty government, that means that Ontario is actually on track to double the provincial debt. To put that in perspective, what it took all the previous Premiers before, from John Sandfield Macdonald to Premier Ernie Eves, 135 years to do, the McGuinty government will double in eight years in office. When you double the debt, when you increase the debt, we all know that debt interest increases along with it. That means that every dollar that is going to debt interest is a dollar that could have gone into health care, that could have gone into classroom education. Instead, the dollars are going into the pockets of Ontario's creditors.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As my colleague from Nepean–Carleton says, that's a quarter of a trillion dollars in provincial debt.

This government has tried to be all things to all people, to throw money at every problem under the sun. As a result, they're on track to doubling the provincial debt, and that's why families want to see change here in the province of Ontario.

We're joined today, as well, by some of those leaders in Ontario who want to make a difference, who want to take us down an entirely different path. I want to recognize them here in the gallery today. Dave Brister, who is our candidate in Essex, has chosen to join us here today.

Wafik Sunbaty, an engineer and leader in his field from Mississauga–Streetsville, has joined us. Rick Nicholls, a businessman and training consultant whose services are sought North America-wide, from Chatham–Kent Essex has joined us here in the assembly. I want to welcome as well Ben Shenouda. Ben is the head of the Independent Pharmacists Association of Ontario, a small business owner who wants to make a difference by running for the PC Party in Brampton West. Welcome as well.

When you look through the details of this latest so-called budget, you know that the numbers simply do not add up, and families won't be fooled by that. I guess the only way for the numbers to add up is for the McGuinty government to bring in another whopping tax increase on the backs of Ontario families.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, no. They can't take any more.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They can't take any more. Enough is enough.

We heard the finance minister today, during my questions during question period, say, "Oh, no. No new taxes." But families have heard that one before. They have heard the Premier say, "No new taxes," and then he brought in the so-called health tax, a big tax grab on the backs of ordinary, hard-working families that, by the way, despite the title, goes into the general treasury, not into health care. Then the Premier said, "Well, I won't do it again," and then he brought in the HST tax grab, which threw 8% more on the basics like heat, hydro and gasoline. Now he's saying, "Trust me, I'm not going to do it again." What an incredible campaign slogan: "'I won't raise your taxes.'" This time, he really means it."

Families won't be fooled. It is absolutely clear that after eight years, only two things are guaranteed about the McGuinty government: They will spend more of your money and then they will raise your taxes to pay for it.

As I travel across this province, whether here in Toronto, back home in Niagara, or from North Bay to Thunder Bay, I hear from Ontario families. I hear from seniors who are saying that it is increasingly difficult to balance the family budget at the end of the month. They tell me they can't afford the HST on the basics like gas, heat and hydro, and they tell me they can't afford the Premier's expensive energy experiments that are driving up their bills. Everywhere I go, seniors, moms and dads, students, small business owners tell me they are sick and tired of being nickel-and-dimed to death by this government. They say, "Enough is enough," and they want to see change that will give them the relief that they deserve.

It sticks in my mind: Today I had an event in Mount Hope in my riding, and a senior citizen came up to me with his hydro bill in his hand—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Shaking.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —hands shaking, with both fear and anger in his eyes. He said, "Tim, I've paid my bills my entire life. I've paid them on time, and now I can't pay my hydro bill anymore, let alone the increases that are still yet to come." And then there was a couple from Picton who wrote to me, and they're upset about how much the HST has increased the cost of oil to heat their home. They wrote to me and they said that they have to sell their farm and downsize because they can't keep up with the basic costs. And then there's the married couple in Windsor, both shift workers—not an uncommon situation in ridings like my own, in Hamilton or Niagara—who have no choice but to do their household chores during the day: They're on shift work. And that's when the McGuinty government's mandatory smart meters are

charging the highest rates for hydro. These folks can't take a day off work just to do the chores.

These hard-working families, these seniors, they are not looking for handouts. They're just looking for a fair deal from this government. They want a fair shake, and they want to be treated with the respect they deserve.

1600

This 300-page non-budget offered nothing for those seniors. It offered nothing for that hard-working couple in Windsor and it offered nothing for that farmer in Picton. It brought no real relief for average families. Instead, what it does offer is a prescription to raise taxes on Ontario families yet again. The only matter is, will the government announce it before the election or try to sneak through and bring it in if they get re-elected?

We have members opposite who are openly musing—Liberal members who are campaigning for a carbon tax. We have Liberal members who are campaigning to put a new school tax across the province, and I think they're also looking at increasing the HST, whether it's a point or two points. I believe that's all on the table when it comes to this government, because we have seen this movie before. Every time before an election, the Premier says, "I swear I won't increase your taxes," and then he brings in a massive tax hike. They want to go for the hat trick.

We're going to fight them every step of the way and bring real relief to Ontario families, because it is clear that Ontario families need a new approach. They need a government that respects that they do not have an infinite ability to pay. They want to see a change in government from the one that sees Ontario families as a bottomless ATM machine. They want to see a new government that respects the fact that it's Ontario families who pay the bills.

That's why the PC caucus has already brought forward several good ideas to give families relief and to focus government funding on services people care about and need, like front-line health care; policies like pulling the plug on the mandatory smart meter tax machines and giving families a choice on their hydro bills; ideas like conducting a forensic audit of the debt retirement charge that families to date should have paid off—families want to know, where did the money go? How much is left to pay? And when will this debt be paid off?—and ideas to cut out the McGuinty waste to invest in the front line, like closing the doors on these regional health bureaucracies called the LHINs and putting every penny into front-line health care instead.

And also in our sights: We would continue to push the government—and if they don't do it, we will—to shut down the needless Ontario Power Authority bureaucracy that is driving up our hydro bills, and passing on the savings to Ontario families.

Next week, we'll debate—and I hope we'll get the members' opposite support—a sunset review process for all 600-plus agencies, boards and commissions to root out the waste and to use the savings for the front line, like health care, and to balance the books here in the province of Ontario.

So what does that mean? This means, for families, finally a chance to get ahead, a chance to balance the family budget and have the confidence to spend again on their priorities, not the government's priorities. That's the kind of budget we wanted to see, and it is the plan that an Ontario PC government will deliver to hard-working families in this province.

This budget made it absolutely clear that families will have a choice: four more years of the same old tax-and-spend Liberal government or a PC government that will give them the relief and the respect that they so much deserve.

There's no doubt that a McGuinty government will raise taxes once again on the backs of Ontario families, and a PC government will give them relief, put money back in their pockets and bring needed change so our great province of Ontario can lead again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Kormos has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Bradley has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1605.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Carroll, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Energie

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Publications

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Thursday 31 March 2011

Jeudi 31 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 31 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 31 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 30, 2011, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: As I call the order this morning, I'd like to wish the Minister of Revenue a happy birthday, and I'd like to call government order 51.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I begin my remarks, I guess I'll start with the one congratulatory note that I'll strike this morning and that is to also wish the Minister of Revenue a happy birthday. In terms of congratulatory notes, that will be the end for this morning, from my perspective, but I hope she has a lovely day.

It's my pleasure, my privilege, to rise on behalf of New Democrats and my colleagues here in this caucus to talk about the McGuinty government's budget, which, of course, they introduced earlier this week.

It's certainly an interesting budget, I think all would agree, but when all is said and done, I'm convinced that this budget will go down in history as much ado about nothing. It's disappointing, to say the least—extremely disappointing. I say that because families in Ontario were seeking and were expecting so much more from this budget.

If there's one thing that's extremely clear it's that Tuesday's budget shows us again that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are simply out of touch with the pressures that are facing recession-weary families.

Ontario families are scrambling to deal with soaring electricity bills; they're scrambling to deal with rising prices; they're scrambling to deal with increases at the gas pumps and the unfair HST, of course, which makes life so much more unaffordable for most people. They're worried about jobs, jobs that are still very difficult to find; and they're worried about paycheques, paycheques that have not kept up with inflation.

The job losses, the destroyed savings and the overall economic anxiety of the past couple of years have put the squeeze on Ontario families, particularly middle-income families. Dalton McGuinty's answer has been a new sales tax on people's everyday essentials and multi-billion-dollar handouts to some of Ontario's biggest and richest corporations. How is that fair? How is that fair to the people of Ontario? Frankly, it's not fair. It's anything but fair.

The McGuinty government had a chance to actually turn things around this time, turn things around for families in this budget, but they chose instead to stick with the status quo that simply is not working. Despite making outrageous claims about the potential that corporate tax cuts had to create jobs, it is very, very clear from the numbers in the very budget that this government brought forward the other day that the Premier's so-called jobs strategy is not working. It is not working at all.

Mr. Paul Miller: A failure.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek indicates, it is an abject failure. In fact, the so-called jobs plan is in disarray, and with only six months before the next election, the Liberal government is scrambling.

On this side of the House, we are not at all surprised that the government in this budget has quietly reduced their jobs creation estimate by 75,000 jobs over the next three years. That's 75,000 jobs fewer that this government admits are going to be created over the next three years, a change from just last year's forecast. That's a significant climbdown—75,000 jobs. And at the same time, the government continues to hand over billions and billions of dollars to corporations—$6 billion, to be exact—without any job guarantees; not a single job guarantee for over $6 billion in corporate tax giveaways.

The Ontario New Democratic Party does not believe that doling out cash to corporations on a no-strings-attached basis actually works. We don't believe it works for a minute. We have not seen the evidence at all. Over decades of the same kind of program that comes from Liberals and Conservatives, we don't see the evidence that it actually creates jobs. That's been proven over and over and over again, yet this government just doesn't seem to get it.

That's why in fact my federal leader, Jack Layton, has structured his jobs package the way he has. His jobs package actually has strings attached. What a novel idea. It actually achieves something for the people of Ontario.

As Jack's jobs plan makes clear, New Democrats have no problem at all providing incentives to business, but the incentives have to be ones that reward businesses for real investments in things like plant, machinery, training and jobs. That is what I call results-based investment with business, as opposed to across-the-board tax cuts that achieve nothing whatsoever. There have to be real strings attached, and I'm going to return a little bit later to Mr. Layton's jobs package in my speech. It's something that I'm extremely proud of, so I'm going to detail it a bit more in a little while.

But of course jobs aren't the only issue that Ontarians are concerned about. It's a major concern, but it's not the only one. This government will try to hang its hat on a very few items that they have put in this budget. Let's take a minute or two to talk about what those items are.

First, I want to talk a little bit about the government's health care announcements in the budget. I find it extremely ironic—in fact, I find it bordering on insulting—the way that the budget deals with this particular issue. After closing breast cancer clinics in London and forcing patients to fight for their breast cancer treatments, this government puts something in the budget that makes people wonder, "Why should we even believe it? Why should we even believe that they care at all about the breast cancer issue after the way that they've behaved over the last several weeks and, in fact, longer than that—several months?"

And yet, they put together a "breast cancer strategy." I'd say it looks a little bit more, and smells a little bit more, like a government-saving-its-political-bacon kind of strategy. Because they should be ashamed of the way they've behaved, not only in London, with removing those nurses from the breast-screening clinic who were supporting women who were suffering with the horrible disease of breast cancer, but then preventing Jill Anzarut from getting the medication that her oncologist had prescribed for her because her tumour was just a little too small—until, of course, the media got involved and New Democrats got involved and forced the government to back away from that callous and horrible position they were in. It's disgraceful, and it's absurd to think that a nominal investment in breast cancer screening over three years absolves this government from anything at all in terms of their behaviour over the last little while on this issue.

0910

Then there's education, specifically post-secondary education. I want to talk a little bit about that. When Ontario is the single most expensive province in which to obtain a university degree in Canada and students are carrying an average debt load of approximately $30,000 upon graduation, why would anybody believe that this government has a plan to help families struggling with the cost of putting their kids through university? It is obvious that they have no plan whatsoever, especially when the plans that they've advanced before have been scrapped so quickly. I'll talk about that in a minute, but I want to go back to post-secondary education.

We have a government that in their budget made this announcement about 60,000 new spaces. Sixty thousand new spaces? I think that's okay. I don't have a problem with that. What I have a problem with is that people can't afford to put those kids in those spaces. Families can't afford to fill those spaces with their children, with their youth. Why? Because it's too expensive. The budget doesn't speak to the affordability of post-secondary education, which is the most pressing issue in post-secondary education right now. The government all but ignores it. How shameful is that? It's like dangling a carrot out there for young people, saying, "Oh, we're opening all these spaces, but whoops, we'll pull that carrot back. Guess what? You're not going to be able to afford to go." It's shameful. It's absolutely shameful.

That doesn't even address some of the other issues that we know are quite embarrassing for the province of Ontario, like the fact that we have the lowest per capita investment in post-secondary education of all the provinces in this great country.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Number 10.

Mr. Paul Miller: Number 10.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ten out of 10. It doesn't address the fact that there continue to be growing and growing numbers of students in classes, and professors are not growing at the same rate. Needless to say, the ratio between students and professors is alarming.

What does that say? That says we have an issue about the quality of post-secondary education if we continue to ignore those growing class sizes. And yet, nothing at all from this government on that very important issue. They think a shiny announcement of 60,000 new spaces some time down the road—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Over five years.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —over five years—is the panacea, is the solution, is the answer to our post-secondary education crisis.

I think parents would disagree, and I think students—although I know students are happy about the idea of having more spaces—are still very, very concerned about access, about quality and about affordability.

I was starting to say how the government likes to make all these plans. They talk about the breast cancer strategy and the student strategy and post-secondary and all these wonderful, shiny plans, but we know that the government announces lots of plans and they don't follow through. In fact, this very budget was used to announce the rollback of previous plans that they had announced in other budgets; for example, the brand new courthouse in west-end Toronto that was supposed to be helping to deal with the massive backlog of cases in the court system. I mean, let's face it; there are cases being thrown out of the courts because people are waiting far too long to get to trial.

What does that mean? What's the implication of that? I would suggest that the implication is that in some very serious crimes that have been committed, the perpetrators of those crimes are not being held to account through our justice system because our justice system can't handle the number of trials that are on the docket. So they wait

months and months and they stretch to years and years, and guess what? The cases get thrown out of court because people have had to wait too long to go through the justice system. So congratulations to the government creating even more pressure in our justice system that is already overburdened. That's what this budget did: It scrapped that courthouse in west-end Toronto.

Why would anybody believe at all that this tired, out-of-touch McGuinty Liberal government has any real plan at all, on any front? There may be a plan somewhere there, and in fact that's one that concerns me. Because there may be a plan in there that they're not really making clear, not making obvious; it's one that's not out in the open, if you will, within the pages of the budget. It's referred to, it's suggested, it's a little murky, which is what makes it, potentially, the most dangerous thing of all.

That plan is a shift—it's a shift towards the privatization of public service delivery. That is laced throughout this budget—that concept, that idea, that prospect—in a couple of different areas.

In this budget, the government has opened the door to American-style privatization of service delivery. That has New Democrats very, very concerned. That model has not worked; it has not worked south of the border and it will not work here.

If this government thinks that it can parcel off the delivery of important public services to the private sector, it will find significant opposition from Ontario's New Democrats.

This government must reveal all of their plans, all of their intentions, all of their details before any decisions are made in that regard. Every single one of those plans, every single one of those schemes to hand over our public services to the private sector must come into this Legislature for full debate and full discussion, because I can tell you, not only will we be very, very vocal in our opposition to such a move, but I trust that many, many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Ontarians will be speaking with the same voice as New Democrats on that issue.

It's my expectation—in fact, it's my demand—that if that is the direction that this government intends to pursue, we need to know about it and we need to know about it in all its clarity straight up front so that it can be appropriately reviewed. It's my expectation and it's my demand.

In the lead-up to this budget, New Democrats asked the McGuinty government very clearly, for weeks on end in the lead-up to the budget—asked them very, very clearly—to do one simple thing, and that was to put people first in their budget for 2011; to actually put the people of Ontario, the families of Ontario, at the front of the line when it came to their considerations about how to deal with the $124-billion program. I think it's pretty clear that they utterly failed to meet our expectations.

They could have made life more affordable for families by taking the HST off of home heating and off of hydro. That would have helped people keep money in their pockets, that would have helped them through what is a very, very difficult financial time for them. But did we see that in the budget?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No, we did not, as my friend from Toronto–Danforth says; we did not see that in the budget.

The government decided to just cut families loose, cut Ontarians loose, not help out with the affordability of everyday life, which we know, which I know from going across this province and talking to people pretty much every day, is top of mind. The people of Ontario are very, very concerned.

Instead of addressing that, by taking the HST off of hydro and home heating, what does this government do? They put another $400 million into a corporate tax giveaway. They could have ensured front-line health services were there for families who need them. That's what they could have prioritized in this budget. What do they do instead? Instead, they continue to slash important health programs and services, announcing more than $100 million in new cuts in this budget, and refusing to put a hard cap on an outrageous situation of constantly rising CEO salaries, particularly in hospitals.

0920

It's interesting, because the government has a little phrase in their budget—I think you could call it a phrase. It says in the budget that they're going to reduce the funding of executive offices for transfer payment agencies by 10%. That's what they talk about. So I started thinking, what is that all about? And again, what that is all about is a Liberal government that's more concerned about their own political bacon and more concerned about setting up an illusion that they're actually getting at the nub of the issue by putting in this phrase that is really quite amorphous. It's quite uncertain. Nobody knows exactly what that means. What does that mean, reduce the executive office budgets of transfer payment agencies by 10%?

Does that say a hard cap on CEO salaries? Is that what it says? Does it say a hard cap on CEO salaries? CEO salaries in the public sector, by the way, in some cases are pushing seven digits. Some of those hospital CEOs are just a hair under a $1-million pay annually, and they're getting that $1-million pay for laying off front-line nurses. That's their achievement; that's why they get those big bucks.

There are CEOs who are getting pay increases annually that are two and three and four times what an average worker in Ontario makes—and that's just for the pay increase for the hospital CEO. There's something seriously wrong when we have a government that refuses to acknowledge the obscenity of that situation and refuses to do something serious about reining it in. That's exactly what we have with the McGuinty Liberals: a government that's prepared to maintain the obscene status quo when it comes to CEO salaries in the broader public sector, and that is quite shameful.

You know, this government could have done something to ensure that the concerns of northern Ontario

families were addressed in this budget. But what did they do instead? Instead, they slashed the budget of some of the most important ministries that connect with northern Ontario communities, some of the ministries that are most involved in northern Ontario: the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. These two ministries get slashed; this is what the government has to offer for northern Ontario. It's as if, for the McGuinty government, northern Ontario doesn't exist. That's how bad it is. I invite anyone to go to northern Ontario and talk to the folks up there, because that's certainly how they tell me they feel. They've been telling me they feel that way for an awfully long time.

I now want to discuss some of the recent Ontario economic history so that we can show why we think this budget is as inadequate as we believe that it is. Between September 2008 and May 2009, 250,000 Ontarians lost their jobs. That's a quarter of a million jobs that are gone. In 2009 alone, real GDP in this province contracted by 3.6%. The unemployment rate in cities like Windsor and Oshawa spiked well into the double digits during that time, and Toronto was not all that far behind. From retail to information technology, no sector was safe from what we now commonly refer to as the great recession.

Although there are some signs of recovery on the horizon, economists to this day continue to warn of a prolonged period of sluggish growth. Unemployment remains stubbornly high, and while other provinces have recovered to their pre-recession employment levels, Ontario is in a different situation. At least 16,000 fewer Ontarians are working today than were in 2008.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Some of the members across the way think that's funny, and they're chuckling over there. I don't think it's funny at all, particularly for those 16,000 families.

Meanwhile, what's happening is, real wages are stagnating. In fact, after inflation is taken into account, the average hourly wage has not changed at all since 1991. Imagine that. The average wage hasn't changed; it has flatlined since 1991. Most people are getting by with less.

But that's just most people who are getting by with less. There are some exceptions to that scenario. For example, Canada's CEOs are doing better than at any time in the history of our country. By 3 p.m. on January 1, they had already collected more in pay than the average person earns in an entire year—by 3 p.m. on their first day of work.

Instead of addressing this inequality, government after government in Ontario has sacrificed fiscal capacity for corporate tax cuts. It's a shameful, shameful recipe that leaves people behind. From 1999 to today, successive Progressive Conservative and Liberal governments have handed out more than $20 billion in corporate tax cuts. Meanwhile, corporate profits increased 7.9% last quarter, to $66 billion. That's good news for the CEOs and the shareholders, but it raises serious questions about the economic usefulness of the McGuinty government's multi-billion-dollar corporate tax cuts.

As I indicated earlier, Ontario's record on post-recession job creation is not as strong as other provinces. Other provinces are doing much, much better in terms of their post-recession job creation—like Manitoba; there's a good example. In that province—with an NDP government, I might add—things are quite different. They have stopped further corporate tax cuts. While Ontario remains 16,000 jobs below its pre-recession peak, Manitoba has gained 15,000 more jobs than it had before the recession.

To get a real sense of where this corporate tax money is going in Ontario, it helps to look at a sector of our economy and see what the government has done with the additional revenue. The Ontario government's own budget says the corporate income tax cut will hand $535 million to banks and $135 million to insurance companies. I should add that those are immensely profitable banks and immensely profitable insurance companies. They are receiving that largesse on top of $520 million more already provided to the banks through the elimination of the capital tax—because we all know the banks just need that money; they're just suffering so bad.

In total, of the $4 billion of corporate and capital taxes that the government has cut, a whopping $1.2 billion of that will be pocketed by banks and insurance companies. The vast majority is going to only eight companies which dominate Ontario's financial sector. Who are these eight companies? I'll list them off for you: Scotiabank, Royal Bank, TD Bank, Bank of Montreal, CIBC, Sun Life Financial, Manulife Financial Corp. and Great-West Life.

Over the past year, and this is what adds insult to injury, while they are reaping in the largesse that is showered upon them by this government and their corporate tax cuts, employment in this very sector, the financial sector—get ready for this: Has it increased? Because that's what the government says, "Corporate tax cuts create jobs." That's their mantra.

0930

So do you think employment has done well in the financial sector? You would think so. That's what the government thinks. Well, I wonder if anybody is surprised to know that in fact that sector shed 25,000 jobs in the last year alone. The very sector that's getting all the money from the McGuinty Liberals is cutting jobs to the tune of 25,000 in a single year.

If the money didn't go to create jobs in the financial sector, then where did it go? If the very sector that gets the lion's share of the goodies doesn't create the jobs, where did it go? Where did the benefit go? Where did that money go, instead of to job creation? Of course, it went to profits. All of the money that the government gave to the banks and insurance companies—$4 billion; $2.2 billion every single year from here on in, mind you—all of it went into their pockets, went into their profit lines. Profits have increased significantly. CEOs have been awarded significant increases in their salaries as well—no surprise. With those increased profits come huge compensation package increases for the CEOs of those financial institutions.

I have a little chart here. I wish we had one of those functions where I could actually hold up the chart—

although it's a prop—and have it on the screen for the families at home who are watching, because it's extremely interesting. Let me just pick a couple of them off the top of my head here. Let's go for the highest one, Sun Life Financial. Their quarterly profit in the most recent quarter went up by 72%—72%. Congratulations to them. Their CEO pay went up more than 100%, to $8.27 million for one year. So we have one person at the top of this corporation making $8.27 million, up 100%, so he doubled his pay, and in the last quarter, that company increased their profits by 72%. I rue the fact that there isn't another line, another column in my chart, that also has in it how many jobs that particular company shed, because that would be an interesting juxtaposition as well.

Here's another one for you. Scotiabank: Their quarterly profit for the last quarter, the most recent reported quarter, was $1.2 billion—a $1.2-billion profit in one quarter. How many months is one quarter? It's three months, right?

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Three months, $1.2 billion. The CEO pay for Scotiabank: $10.6 million, up 10%. Royal Bank: $1.8 billion, up 23%. Their profit went up 23% in the last reported quarter; $11 million in CEO pay, up 6%. Bank of Montreal: $776 million, up 18%; $9.5 million is the CEO salary—$9.5 million, up 28%. CIBC: an increase of 19% in their quarterly profit, up by $799 million; the CEO pay went up by 50%—a 50% increase in the CEO pay, up to $9.3 million.

I wonder where they get the money for all those profits and all those salary increases. Oh, it came from Ontario families. That's where they got it from.

Dividends for shareholders have been boosted, but the hiring spree hasn't materialized; the jobs are not being created. The truth of the matter is that corporate tax rates are only one of the many, many factors that a business considers when making investments. Evidence shows very clearly that corporate tax cuts have very, very little impact on job creation, yet it's the strategy that this government stubbornly and wrongly clings to. Why is that? It's because those corporate tax cuts have almost no impact on business capital investment spending. That's the bottom line. Since 2000—so that's 11 years—the combined federal-Ontario corporate tax rate will have been reduced from 44% to 25%; that's combined federal-provincial. Yet do you think that business investment in that same time frame, now that they have all this extra cash flow because they're not paying the taxes anymore, is increasing? It's not. At the very same time, business investment has been decreasing since that time.

In fact, rather than investing in productivity, things like machinery, plant and equipment and creating jobs, corporations have been accumulating cash and similar liquid assets at an alarming rate. They are increasing their cash liquidity.

According to StatsCan, corporate holdings of cash and similar assets reached nearly half a trillion dollars by the third quarter of 2010—half a trillion dollars. Since the beginning of the recession, businesses added $83 billion to cash holdings. No-strings-attached corporate tax cuts will only boost already astronomically high cash holdings that these corporations have. That's the only thing that those corporate tax cuts do.

Perhaps most importantly, when compared to the industrial regions of the United States, our real competitors when it comes to jobs, we are already very, very competitive. In fact, we are already more competitive than many of those jurisdictions. Why do I say that? Because, of course, I have the numbers, another nice little chart that we've put together to illustrate the comparison, because our finance minister says, "We have to compete. We have to reduce our corporate tax rates. We have to be competitive with other jurisdictions."

Well, let me show you, Speaker—I wish I could show you but I can't because it's a prop, so I'll read it off:

Location and the combined tax rate: Michigan, tax rate 38.2%; New York—I think it's fair to say we compete with the jurisdiction of Michigan and the jurisdiction of New York—36.1%; Pennsylvania, 37.8%; Great Lakes weighted average—the jurisdictions around the Great Lakes, the states around the Great Lakes—36.6%; the US weighted average, 36.1%. So, 36%, 38%, 36.1%, 36.6%, 37.8%.

Where is Ontario? What's Ontario's combined tax rate, the tax rate that this government is going to continue to reduce over the next couple of years, based on their wonderful failing plan? It's 28.5%—28.5%. Go figure; we're already a heck of a lot lower than most of the jurisdictions with which we're competing—all of the ones on this list.

So you have to wonder: What is this finance minister talking about when he says that the reason for his corporate tax giveaways is to help Ontario be more competitive? It looks like we're already very, very competitive. In fact, I know that we are. So if across-the-board corporate tax cuts won't create jobs, which they won't, and we're already competitive in that regard, then the question is, what will create jobs? What are the alternatives to this wrong-headed direction of the McGuinty Liberal government?

What we believe in is highly targeted incentives that actually reward job creation, something that is actually beneficial to the economy of Ontario and, particularly, for Ontario families and workers who need decent jobs.

Quebec's investment tax credit is one good example of this kind of approach. Manitoba's manufacturing investment tax credit is another success story. In Manitoba, the 10% tax credit against payable income tax for investment in buildings, machinery and equipment makes a huge difference. It's partially refundable, meaning that manufacturers benefit even during the bad years when they're, perhaps, not making a profit.

This will come as no surprise to anyone, as I mentioned: The jobs package announced by my federal leader, Jack Layton, is also a terrific model, in our opinion.

0940

Here is the reader's digest version; I'm going to go over it really quickly. The federal NDP initiative is going

to cost $2.2 billion and generate 220,000 jobs each year. The plan will be paid for by returning the corporate tax rate to the 2008 level of 19.5%, compared to the current rate of 16.5%. The restoration of rates will add $5.9 billion to the federal government coffers, so you will still have $3.7 billion left over to pay for other investments.

What are the specific measures? There's a job creation tax credit for businesses that would give them $4,500 for each new employee hired. That's a job incentive program. The employer would receive the funding in the form of a rebate of employer-side Canada pension plan and employment insurance contributions for a year. There's a $1,000 tax credit if that employee is retained for over a 12-month period. So if they get beyond one year and that employee is retained by the company, another $1,000 tax credit. There's a reduction in the small business tax level to 9% from 11%.

The bottom line: With a plan like that, if you create jobs, you get rewarded. Sounds like a good idea: actually getting something for something. It seems like a no-brainer to me. Somehow this government just doesn't get it. How very, very different that idea is from what the McGuinty Liberals have on offer.

I want to talk a little bit about the least favourite topic of Ontarians, which started, I guess, in the middle of last summer and has seriously continued until this very day, and that is the least favourite new tax, the HST—the unfair HST, I may add. Here's a key question for the government: With household budgets facing a real strain, does harmonizing sales taxes with the federal government really make any sense?

Now, we have been saying no. But while the McGuinty and Harper governments signed their backroom deal, other provinces, like Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and Manitoba, were not convinced. They were not convinced that the HST was the right thing to do. They saw the added burden on consumers, who were already feeling the pinch, as a drag on the economy. The NDP government in Manitoba looked closely at the HST and found that the benefits to business were simply not there.

Here is a brief excerpt from a comprehensive report that their government released to explain its rejection of the HST; I find it quite instructive:

"[C]ompetitiveness gains, particularly for those sectors exposed to export competition, are very modest:

"—... relative tax competitiveness ranking of Manitoba manufacturers against other competing cities would not improve with an HST.

"—A very large part of the savings to business would not directly or significantly improve the competitive position of the export sector....

"[S]ales tax harmonization is just one dimension of overall tax competitiveness and must be considered in the context of other tax measures."

The report goes on to talk about the burden on consumers, and I'm going to quote again:

"A key conclusion of this analysis is that Manitoba consumers would face $405 million in additional sales tax costs under an HST as the sales tax burden shifts from businesses to consumers. The province is concerned about the potential impact that this increased sales tax burden could have on Manitobans' resilient consumer confidence....

"Manitoba does not support harmonization at this time because of the potential risk to the economic recovery and the burden it would place on Manitoba families at a time of economic uncertainty."

Oh, woe that our provincial Liberals didn't think the same way as the New Democrats in Manitoba when they were considering the HST.

So, where are we now? Nearly a year after implementation of the HST in Ontario, Manitoba's conclusions seem very prophetic. While that province has recovered all jobs lost during the recession—in fact, 15,000 more than they had before the recession started—Ontario continues to lag behind.

What else would have been in the budget, from our perspective, to create jobs and ensure prosperity? Well, world leaders like Bombardier, for example, don't just appear out of anywhere; they were nurtured to achieve their current scale by a creative blend of public sector procurement and export-oriented financing. Of course, we can't simply replicate what Quebec has done, what Manitoba has done and what other jurisdictions do, but we can—and shame on us if we don't—draw on the lessons that governments need to play a constructive role in helping businesses grow.

Government does have a role to play. I firmly believe that—a significant role. If we're going to grow our economy, we need to understand the challenges that we're facing and we need to be very innovative about how to deal with those challenges that we face.

In Ontario, in 2011, what that means is being honest about some of our technological and productivity deficiencies. The Premier recently expressed confusion about Ontario's dismal progress in that regard, and I don't think it's all that much of a mystery. There's simply not enough business investments in plant, machinery and information technology in this province, and, just as importantly, not enough investments in people. As I've already said, we need a far better, more targeted financial incentive program for businesses to make those capital investments.

Ontario also needs to do a much better job with training—on-the-job training and training more generally. Government has a role to play here as well. If we want to create prosperity and ensure a strong economic future, people need the skills to perform the value-added jobs of the future. Tax incentives like those used in the Quebec scenario provide important lessons. Quebec's training levy means larger employers are required to invest at least 1% of their payroll into employee training. Now, if they choose not to make that investment, they can pay into a collective fund; that's used to support sectoral training projects instead. It seems pretty smart.

I'm not saying that we just pick up the Quebec model and drop it here in Ontario, but Quebec's levy not only guarantees investment in training; it ensures that everyone is investing. We need to level the playing field

between employers that train and those that simply poach the trained workers off of the ones that did the training. Again, an innovative way for government to help create the right business climate, not based on ideology but based on results—based on the proven results of what's happening in another jurisdiction.

Using government procurement for economic development is another issue that simply makes sense. We can respect our international agreements and at the same time still support Ontario businesses through procurement. Governments all over the world protect local jobs through effective buy-local policies. It simply makes sense. It makes sense to ensure that the billions of dollars that we invest in transit and other infrastructure investments create good-paying jobs right here in the province of Ontario, not somewhere else.

Talk to residents of Thunder Bay about the growth that their community experienced because the city of Toronto ensured that its streetcars and subway cars were going to be created, built and assembled at Bombardier in Thunder Bay. With that kind of commitment to good jobs, innovation and investment will come to Ontario. It's more important than ever for the province to show leadership on this file.

Finally, I want to touch on the challenges facing Ontario's electricity sector because I think the challenges we're facing are an example of what can go wrong when government abandons its role and ideology trumps common sense. For generations, reliable, affordable electricity delivered at cost was one of the pillars of Ontario's economy. In the late 1990s, Ontario's Conservative government—with the support, it should be noted, of their Liberal opposition of the day—decided it was time to deregulate and privatize Ontario's hydro system. I would put to the people of Ontario that that experiment utterly failed, so badly that we are still to this day dealing with that costly mess.

Unfortunately, the current government's obsession with stopgap solutions has left Ontario with a confusing series of hydro bureaucracies and very, very expensive power. We've been pressing for government action on industrial hydro rates for some time, and the current government has started, belatedly, to recognize the problem with a temporary northern industrial hydro rate and a new rate for large industrial users throughout the province. But we can't be satisfied with political stopgap solutions. Stopgap solutions do not provide a secure investment strategy, a secure investment future for companies. Measures that only last a year or two or three don't provide the kind of outlook that's necessary for investment to be attractive. Our challenges around energy prices are not going away in two years, so the solutions can't go away in two years either.

0950

Energy pricing is one of the big issues that we're going to be talking about over the next several months. It's a significant issue that we need to resolve in this province. It's vitally important to just about everyone who has an interest in Ontario, from corporations to individuals.

In closing, I have a few comments to make to wrap up. We live in a province that's facing some serious and enormous challenges, I think everybody would agree, but we also know that Ontarians, by and large, are very resilient. We've been through ups and downs in the past, but we always bounce back. The key is that we need a government that has a vision, that's going to actually take us to where we need to go, where we want to be. I would put to you that the McGuinty government has shown for years now that they lack that vision. This is a tired government. This is a tired, out-of-touch government. This is a tired, out-of-touch government that is out of gas. It's very clear, and I think this budget is just a reflection of that sad reality.

So, sure, they claim that they've turned the corner—I think the budget is called "turning the corner to tomorrow" or something like that. Unfortunately, they turned the corner, yes, but they left families on the side of the road as Dalton McGuinty waved goodbye. That's the problem with the budget overall. Turning the corner and leaving families behind is not a good strategy from my perspective, and never has been. Unfortunately, it has been the ongoing strategy of this government.

They claim that they've turned the corner, but when you look at the recent decisions that they've made, when you look at the budget carefully, it's really clear that, although they've turned the corner, they are on a road to nowhere, and they're trying to take the rest of the province with them. Unfortunately, as they drive along that highway to nowhere, Ontarians are the ones who are left in the dust.

It's very fortunate that the people of this province will have something to say about the vision, or lack thereof, of their provincial government because, of course, 2011 is an election year. It's a chance for people who have been observing their bills going up, who have been watching as the HST continues to take a bite out of their pocketbook each and every day, who have been frustrated by the lack of opportunity in terms of new jobs being created, particularly new jobs that replace the good jobs of the past. It's an opportunity for them to reflect on the fact that they can't afford to put their kids through post-secondary education, or for those who do, end up watching their children struggle with debt loads the size of mortgages once they graduate. They can reflect on the fact that, although the government likes to crow about its all-day learning program in Ontario, we see child care spaces closing by the day and fees in those child care spaces that remain open in Ontario going through the roof, child care becoming less and less affordable at every turn.

They can reflect on a government that, really, has spent a lot of time over the last couple of years feathering the nests of their friends, of their closest colleagues—insiders, that get their lucrative little contracts without any tendering, lobbyists that use public money to come and ask the government for more public money—a government that's focused on billions and billions, in fact over $6 billion, in corporate tax cuts that don't create

jobs. These are the things that Ontarians will be focusing on as they continue to struggle to pay the bills which they are not able to pay because this government has yet again ignored the fundamental issue that Ontarians are grappling with.

It's pretty simple: The affordability of everyday life is on people's minds and it's been there for a while, but this out-of-touch government comes forward with a budget that completely ignores that reality. How shameful is that? Some $6 billion out the door to the richest corporations that aren't creating jobs, and families are basically told, "You've got to make it on your own." No break on the HST on home heating and hydro, something that would have been very, very easy, to take that unfair tax off of home essentials. Did the government even consider it? No; the government didn't even consider it. It would rather just shove hundreds of millions more—$400 million in one little program this year—to the banks and insurance companies while families get told, "Too bad, so sad; you're not important."

I really believe fundamentally that if the families of this province are strong again, that if the families of this province have hope again, that they're doing well, then the province itself is going to be doing well. I think the government's got it all backwards. They haven't figured out that strong families and strong communities create a strong province. They have it backwards; they think it's all trickle-down. Whatever happened to that? I don't understand that. I thought that trickle-down stuff was debunked a long time ago; Reaganomics—remember that?—Thatcherism, all that stuff. Yet here we are—how many years later? Three decades later?—and this government is still implementing the same tired kind of policies that make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Holy smokes; there's something wrong here.

Given the state of things, the stagnation that now marks this government, issues and concerns that I hear from Ontarians as I travel across this great province, the frustration they feel, the neglect that they feel from a government that just doesn't seem to get it; this budget is proof of that. That election that's coming at the end of this year simply cannot come fast enough. I am looking very much forward to the next couple of months because New Democrats are going to be out there on the campaign trail and we're going to be advancing ideas, ones that are responsive to what families have been telling me over the last couple of years.

I've been listening to those families. We are developing a program that responds to the issues that they're telling me that they're concerned about and that they're telling my caucus members that they're concerned about: the member from Welland, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Toronto–Danforth, as well as those others who couldn't join us because they're in committee this morning. New Democrats will be going around the province talking to the people of Ontario about a plan that actually puts them first, that puts them at the front. So that election can't some soon enough.

I've outlined some of those ideas in my speech today but we have many, many more. I can tell you that in every one of those ideas our focus is going to be the families and people of this province, the ones who have been ignored by their government for so many years. I know that New Democrats are going to be proud; we're going to be proud of what we bring forward to the people because it's not going to be something that we sit on Bay Street in a big boardroom with oak-paneled walls and talk to the bankers about. It's actually something that we are developing right now sitting in the kitchens and the community centres and the church basements of the people of Ontario, in their communities. That's what we're all about. That's what we're committed to.

I've outlined some of those strategies today and I look forward, with my caucus colleagues and our candidates, over the next several months, to talking to the people of Ontario about what we think our vision should be, what we think this province should look like and who we think should be the priority in all of the plans, all of the programs, all of the decision-making that a provincial government has before it, because that is what will make our province strong again.

I look forward to sharing these ideas with all of Ontario, and I know that my caucus colleagues are looking forward to doing that as well. Thanks very much for the opportunity.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Horwath has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we have no further business this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There being no further business called, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1000 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to recognize and would like the House to help me welcome the grandparents of page Riley McPhail. His grandparents Karen and Peter McPhail and Linda and Lawerance McLaughlin, and great-aunt Elizabeth Westley.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: As you know well, there are many representatives from the francophone youth federation who are here today at Queen's Park. I believe they will be taking part in a mock Parliament as well today. There are two representatives I wanted to introduce to the Legislature, both of whom are from northern Ontario: We've got Caroline Gélineault, who is the president of the francophone youth federation and who's actually from Longlac but goes to De La Salle secondary school in Ottawa; and Gerrit Wesselink, a former page here in the Legislature from Thunder Bay, who is the northern representative and goes to La Vérendrye high school in

Thunder Bay. Welcome to all of you, but welcome to those two in particular.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'd like to introduce the grandparents of page Emma Redfearn: Lillian and William Korhonen.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais présenter mon bon ami Gilles Morin, qui était député ici pour la circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans et qui est maintenant le président du conseil d'administration de l'Hôpital Montfort.

Je voudrais aussi souhaiter la bienvenue aux étudiants de ma circonscription de l'école L'Alternative et de l'école De La Salle avec leurs professeurs.

L'hon. Monique M. Smith: Je voudrais aussi souhaiter la bienvenue aux étudiants de F.J. McElligott de Mattawa et de l'Odyssée à North Bay qui sont ici parmi nous aujourd'hui, les jeunes parlementaires francophones. Bienvenue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Now, before the full House, I'm running the risk of violating standing orders by reporting that the Minister of Revenue is in fact one year younger today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That means "happy birthday."

Notwithstanding the introduction, I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Mr. Gilles Morin, former Deputy Speaker and MPP for Carleton East during the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments. Mr. Morin is here assisting with the fifth annual Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario.

In the galleries today we have students, educators and coordinators from the federation from across Ontario who have come to Queen's Park for a three-day long student Parliament. It's the only youth Parliament in Ontario that runs while the House is in session. We may very well have future MPPs amongst us today. Welcome to all of our guests in both galleries.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier McGuinty has come up with more doom schemes to restrain spending than Wile E. Coyote has to catch the Road Runner, but no one believes his so-called restraint measures any longer. This is a Premier who doubled the debt, tripled the number of bureaucrats making over $100,000 and turned Ontario into a have-not province.

Premier, why do you think Ontario families will believe your so-called pledge to cut executive salaries that you made on page 56 of the budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to take the question and welcome it from my honourable colleague. I want to begin by reminding her that we expanded the sunshine law to cover OPG and Hydro employees. That was in stark contrast to the previous government. We also put in place a new law on the books in Ontario that prevents governments from hiding deficits. Again, that was also the result of the activity on the part of a previous government.

I'm pleased to note that this year the average OPS salary on the list dropped by 1%. I'm also pleased to note that our 400 top-earning OPS employees on the list saw their salaries decrease this year. I'm also pleased to note that the average broader public sector employee salary has also decreased this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: To reiterate, in seven years Premier McGuinty has doubled the debt, tripled the sunshine list and turned Ontario into a have-not province.

Ontario families know a cut to executive salaries is never going to happen because you never keep your word. You said you would get a public sector wage freeze. You failed. You said you would streamline agencies to save money. You failed.

The Premier acts as though his job is done as soon as he has finished announcing the latest doomed restraint measure. Why do you treat spending restraint like a PR scheme, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's a lot of negativity. There's a lot of gloom and doom on that side. I think that is grounded, in large measure, in a psychology of not being able to take a stand, not having a plan, not being able to be forthright with the people of Ontario in terms of the kind of alternatives that you want to propose.

Let me speak about yet another announcement we made this morning. The Minister of Transportation and I made an announcement to invest $8.4 billion in a new LRT line. It's 25 kilometres—the biggest investment of its kind. It's $8.4 billion. It's a multi-year project.

We know that when they had the job of government, they cut all funding to public transit. So what I think Ontarians, but especially Torontonians, want to know today is: Will they respect that $8.4-billion commitment to public transit in the city of Toronto?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Things are not nearly as rosy in Ontario as the Premier would suggest. You have doubled the debt, tripled the sunshine list and turned Ontario into a have-not province—not really something to be proud of. Every dollar Ontario families have to pay toward your debt is a dollar that's not going to their priorities, like front-line health care.

Our Ontario PC leader has a plan to reduce spending on government waste and to give relief to families and seniors. His sunset review bill will have a committee of elected members review spending to save the programs that work, fix the ones that need fixing and get rid of the rest. You want to hand the control of this to a panel of high-priced, hand-picked consultants. Why is Premier McGuinty's solution for waste and bloat to create more waste and bloat?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it is informative and telling that when my honourable colleague's leader had

the opportunity to speak to our budget—he was allocated a full hour—he only had 15 minutes to speak to this budget, and that consisted exclusively of a litany of criticism. I think the times and the office demand a bit more than that. At some point in time, you have got to put up—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. The member from Renfrew.

New question?

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, my question is for the Premier. Premier McGuinty, you've doubled the debt, tripled the sunshine list and turned Ontario into a have-not province. The latest sunshine list of bureaucrats you pay over $100,000 a year is due to be released today. The anticipation is killing us, so tell us now: How much more did the McGuinty government cost Ontario families this year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We'll have an opportunity to review the sunshine list together. As I indicated a moment ago, we have taken a number of steps in order to ensure that we bring more transparency, more accountability and more public scrutiny to government expenses, including putting in place an expansion of the sunshine law and a new law that prohibits the government from ever hiding a deficit in the future.

1040

I think what we really want to get on to, hopefully sooner rather than later, is where that party opposite stands on all those issues that weigh heavily on the minds of Ontarians. They're very concerned about their unwavering commitment to cut $3 billion out of their health care. They're very concerned about their unwavering and solemn commitment to shut down full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. They're very concerned about where they're going to go when it comes to water inspectors and meat inspectors. That's part of their litany—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Sarnia–Lambton will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I think it's really important for Ontario families to know what's happening here. Premier McGuinty has doubled the debt, tripled the sunshine list and turned Ontario into a have-not province. No—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing keeps making reference to another member in this House. There have been other members in this House who have been named for a wide variety of reasons. I just ask that you not persist in making comments.

Please continue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier, no one believes that you're going to restrain spending when the sunshine list has ballooned to 60,000 bureaucrats under your watch.

The recession has forced many seniors to put off retirement. Families have had to take second jobs and make other sacrifices. But it's no wonder that you didn't do anything in the budget to help them make ends meet: You've spent everything on bloating the bureaucracy.

How did you get to be so insensitive to Ontario families and seniors who had to weather the recession so that your bureaucrats didn't have to?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians were disappointed that we didn't get the support of the party opposite on our budget.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What about risk management for farmers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The risk management program, for example, is the single greatest commitment to the Ontario family farm in 30 years.

What my friends opposite don't understand is that this will not only benefit the family living on that farm; it will also benefit and strengthen the rural economy. It will benefit and strengthen the vitality of rural education and rural health care. And more important, perhaps, than any of that, it will strengthen our continuing capacity as families all around the province to have access to the best-quality locally grown food. That starts with our risk management programs. That's why it's a mystery to me that the party opposite won't support our farmers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I think the answer just shows that it takes a special kind of insensitivity to make Ontario families and seniors pay more for bloated government that they can't afford.

While families and seniors made sacrifices for you to keep spending and spending, life in the McGuinty government is recession-proof. Since taking office, Premier McGuinty has increased the number of assistant deputy ministers from 95 to 160. It's your way of getting around built-in restraint rules. Instead of bureaucrats living within a salary cap, you just create new high-paid executive positions for them to fill.

What makes you think Ontario families will believe in your latest restraint measure when you have a track record of trying to get around salary caps?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's interesting, the pattern that develops in the party opposite. They tell us that we're spending too much money, except when it comes to matters of concern in their own ridings. I just want to review some of those things so that they're reminded of that.

The leader of the official opposition says that he wants us to invest in a development program for Flowers Canada in his riding. The MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke wants money to go into Highway 7 and extend it from Arnprior to Renfrew. The MPP for Carleton–Mississippi Mills wants us to improve roads around Foy Provincial Park. The MPP for Durham wants us to spend more money on broadband Internet, extended through the

municipality of Clarington. The MPP for Aurora wants us to invest in the Buttonville Airport.

Why is it they want us to cease and desist on all spending except when it comes to matters specific to their ridings?

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Hot on the heels of this government's underwhelming budget, later this morning the sunshine list will be released. As in previous years, Ontarians can expect countless public sector CEOs receiving half-million-dollar-plus salaries. These executives work in health care, in education and in energy.

Why didn't the McGuinty government use the budget to rein in some of these outrageously excessive CEO salaries?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague the leader of the NDP. But I'm a little surprised at her characterization of the budget presented just recently in this Legislature. She said it was "much ado about nothing."

Is that really how she chooses to describe our risk management program to support the Ontario family farm? Is that really how she chooses to describe 60,000 new post-secondary education spaces? Is that how she chooses to describe our commitment to the next 50,000 four- and five-year-olds who are going to be enrolled in full-day kindergarten? Is that how she chooses to describe our breast cancer screening program being extended to women between the ages of 30 and 49 who are at high risk? Is that how she chooses to describe our initiative for a mental health and addictions strategy, starting with children and youth? Finally, is that how she really chooses to describe the fact that we are expanding pharmacy services for seniors and social assistance recipients?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government's commitment to reining in public sector executives' salaries is flimsy at best. In his budget speech, the finance minister spoke of "reducing funding for executive offices at hospitals, universities and other government agencies." Well, that's hardly definitive.

Rather than play around the edges, why didn't the government come forward with a hard cap on public executive salaries? Why did he not do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the advice received from my honourable colleague, and I hope we will have her support, if not on the budget in its entirety, then certainly with respect to the particular provision which we are now discussing.

What we are putting in place is a provision that will require that funding to executive offices at our hospitals, universities and a number of other government agencies be reduced by 10%. You can't do that and not get at salaries; that's exactly what we're both talking about.

I express recognition of the sentiment put forward by my colleague. I would ask her for her support of this particular provision. We're going to cut those salaries by 10%.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what struggling Ontario families see: hydro bills going through the roof, hospitals slashing services and cutting front-line staff, the cost of post-secondary education soaring; all the while, the very people running our energy, health care and education sectors are doing very, very well.

What will it take for the Premier to realize there's a problem here?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague, and I would ask for her support in this regard: We are going to reduce funding for our executive offices at hospitals, universities and government agencies by 10%.

We're also requiring of our major agencies that they deliver $200 million in efficiencies by 2013, agencies like Ontario Lottery and Gaming and the LCBO. Those are two specific provisions.

My honourable colleague also knows that we're making efforts to reduce the size of the OPS in a way that does not compromise the quality of services that we have enhanced for the people of Ontario.

We are bringing a balanced, progressive, thoughtful, responsible approach, and I would recommend that to my honourable colleague.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. This is a fundamental question of fairness; that's what this is. Ontario families are being squeezed for every last penny. They're being forced to pay more to receive much less; all the while, they see CEOs cashing in on the public dime, making exorbitant salaries and raking in even more when they're fired. How is that right?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We're very proud of the fact that the CEOs at Hydro One and OPG are making less than half of what they made when we came to office.

We are very proud of the initiatives we put in the budget that will, in fact, reduce the executive compensation packages for executives of the broader public sector. A good example of that is OLG, which has just announced several weeks ago that not only are they bringing it down; they're reducing the number of senior executives.

The member opposite knows that these are difficult times, and we welcome her support of this. I'm just looking forward to see if, in fact, she'll vote for this initiative in the budget when it comes to this House for a full vote at—

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and notwithstanding the fact that you're moving back to your seat right now: The persistence of your interjections gets to be a little over-

whelming. I'd just ask that you be a little more cognizant of your leader in her wanting to hear the answer.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here are some recent examples of how broken the public sector executive compensation model is: The former head of the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Windsor got $300,000 after being fired; in Cambridge, the hospital CEO got $650,000 in severance; in Waterloo region, the hospital CEO got almost $750,000 for leaving. The people of Niagara, in fact, are still waiting to learn the amount a dismissed hospital CEO is going to pocket in their area.

These are all communities that have seen significant health care cuts, from staff to clinics to surgeries, while the hospital CEOs walked away with a sweetheart deal. Does the Premier really think that this is the best use of our precious health care dollars?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Every one of those communities has seen a serious increase in funding for health care, reductions in wait-lists, more long-term-care beds, better emergency treatment, more nurses and more family health teams. The leader of the third party wants to pretend that you can make the legal environment of the province and the country, the constitutional environment of the province and the country, go away. You can't. She ought to know that. Most thoughtful people do.

When these situations happen where there are terminations, we have to rely on the goodwill of boards—who serve the province well overall, in my view—to make decisions that minimize the costs associated with this that are, frankly, beyond the control of any government, regardless of political stripe.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that the way she characterized health care is wrong. This party has not only—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know what? New Democrats have been very clear: We believe that there needs to be a hard cap on public sector executive salaries, and we'd make sure that these sweetheart severance deals are a thing of the past.

This government doesn't seem to take this issue seriously. The finance minister said they're just washing their hands of that responsibility. They may claim that they are trying to tackle the problem through their strange words in the budget, but at the end of the day it's clear this government is not prepared to rein in the sky-high salaries of their CEO friends.

When will this government finally stand up for Ontario families and actually clamp down on public sector CEO salaries?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, she talks a good game, but she couldn't possibly do what she says. You know what? I remember a period of time a number of years ago where we were buying forests in South America and compensating hydro CEOs probably at a higher percentage based on revenues and return than we are today.

The other thing that I think the NDP has an absolute obligation to talk about is: Does that mean severance payouts and collective agreements will no longer apply? Our laws are designed to protect working people. The jurisprudence around these things protects far more people who make a lot less money. She wants to undermine that principle; we don't. We think severance is appropriate for working men and women.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, your latest budget reveals that Ontario will receive $2.3 billion in equalization payments next year, thanks to your record of mismanagement. That's a 142% increase over last year's have-not-province bailout. When asked yesterday, you claimed Ontario is not a have-not province.

Minister, are you so out of touch that you don't even recognize anymore what you've done to Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This year, the coming year, the people of Ontario will put in $6 billion and get $2 billion back. That is a system that doesn't work. This year, provinces with much smaller economies than ours will get more money per capita for hospital beds, for roads, for schools than Ontario will.

This is about a formula that harms Ontario. Instead of referring to the strongest economy in North America as have-not, he ought to stand up to the federal Conservatives and say, "Fix this now." You don't need to take my word for it; take the word of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Take the word of the Mowat institute. Take the word of Queen's. Stand up for Ontario. Let us undo this injustice. Help us build a better education and health—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just say to the honourable members of the opposition: Please don't encourage them.

Members will please come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: I must have hit a nerve; I can see that. The finance minister and Premier McGuinty have done to Ontario what Harold Ballard did to the Toronto Maple Leafs: You took Ontario, Canada's storied franchise and the leader of Confederation, and turned it into a have-not province. Fortunately, the difference between Harold Ballard and Premier McGuinty is that Ontario voters have a chance to choose change and get rid of Premier McGuinty.

When will you come to your senses, accept responsibility and apologize to Ontario families for turning Ontario into a have-not province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The one thing I will agree on with the member opposite is that he hit a nerve, because Ontarians are proud Canadians. We're proud of the fact that we put $50 billion in equalization over the last 10 years. What needs to be fixed is a system that takes the strongest economy in the country, the largest, most diverse, one that has a huge automotive sector, financial services and a growing sector in information technology

and intellectual property—what is wrong is a situation where we have less dollars per capita for hospitals, less dollars per capita for schools, less dollars per capita for roads, less dollars per capita for all the vital public services.

Let's stand up together for Ontario and demand, as the chamber of commerce has, that equalization be changed once and for all. Please join us in that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to remind the members from Lanark, Simcoe–Grey, Leeds–Grenville, Nepean–Carleton and Renfrew that you asked the question, and with the interjections that you were putting forth, none of you could hear the answer.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Four years ago, Premier McGuinty promised Toronto residents relief from long commutes on overcrowded buses. He promised a comprehensive light-rail network called Transit City. Last year, the government cut $4 billion from Transit City. Today, the Premier effectively killed the plan. Why did the Premier so easily capitulate to Mayor Ford and abandon his promise of a comprehensive transit plan for Toronto?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It takes a—

Interjection: A New Democrat.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I didn't want to say that. I was going to say that it takes a particularly unique and idiosyncratic perspective to somehow interpret $8.4 billion in the largest LRT project ever in the history of this country as somehow a negative.

We are very proud of what we've been able to accomplish working together with the city of Toronto. We've never lost sight of the fact that ultimately, we're working together for the people of Ontario, but more specifically, for the people of Toronto. It's the people of Toronto who have won today.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a good thing that the Eglinton line is proceeding, but it's been cut by 13 kilometres and delayed by four years. The 17-kilometre Finch West line has been cancelled outright and the Sheppard line is completely up in the air, dependent on uncertain private funding.

Why did the Premier so willingly abandon Transit City and sign on to a scaled-down plan that will cost twice as much per kilometre and serve 250,000 fewer people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we're very proud of the announcement that we were able to make this morning, together with Mayor Ford. We're talking about, again, a 25-kilometre-long line that extends north from Kennedy all the way up to Scarborough Town Centre. It is nothing short of historic. We're talking about 82,000 jobs. Every one of those 130 LRT cars will be built in Thunder Bay by Bombardier, benefiting the people of the north.

My colleague opposite somehow interprets it as a negative if we find a way to work with the government of the day at city hall—any city hall. I think we have a shared responsibility at Queen's Park to find common ground, to build on that common ground and to advance a case on behalf of the people we are privileged to represent. That's exactly what has happened here today.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, you and I have had the pleasure of sitting down with commodity groups and farmers in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who have told me the current programs are not meeting their needs. The economic impacts of volatile crop prices, among other challenges, have left them in a vulnerable situation. For that reason, my farmers were very happy to hear the announcement of risk management programs in yesterday's budget.

Charlie Clarke, president of the Victoria Haliburton Federation of Agriculture and a local farmer who lives just south of Lindsay, said, "This is the best announcement we've ever had from a provincial government. This is something that farmers have lobbied for for a long time. Finally, a provincial government has listened. At least now the next generation of farmers has something to come home to."

Minister, why couldn't the government have introduced this type of program sooner?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I do thank you for the question. This budget supports the years of hard work on the part of Ontario's farmers with the leadership of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition. Commodity organizations developed their own proposals—programs by farmers for farmers. These proposals built on the pilot RMP for grain and oilseed farmers, a program that was developed by farmers for farmers.

Ontario's farm organization leaders deserve to be congratulated for a job very well done. They have worked very hard, not just for the betterment of their own sector, but also to strengthen the province's agri-food as a whole. The federal government needs to come to the table to support our Ontario farmers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, I appreciate you informing the House and I appreciate all the work you did on making this happen.

Our government has worked hard in helping farmers across the province. However, there is still one thing: Ontario farmers continue to express concern that the current suite of programs is not meeting their needs, and the federal government has acknowledged this position and committed to explore other options, but they haven't come to the table.

What more can be done to help?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Ontario farmers have told the federal government that the current suite of programs is

not meeting their needs. They need predictability, bankability, stability. In an open letter to Prime Minister Harper, the ag coalition wrote, "We share a common interest in securing a sustainable future for farmers in Ontario and across Canada. But we have yet to see a tangible expression of that interest from your government in a time of great distress across rural Ontario."

I can tell you that we have listened and we have acted, and we need support to get the federal government onside with our risk management. I ask the members from across the way to pick up the phone, call your federal cousins, and while you're out helping them go door to door—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford. The Minister of Agriculture.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford will please come to order. Attorney General. Minister of Community Safety. Minister of Finance.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford, I've just warned you. You're interjecting so much, you can't even hear me.

I'd just remind the honourable members again of a statement that I delivered earlier in the week and to do everything they possibly can to focus in on issues that pertain to the province of Ontario and not issues dealing with a federal election.

New question.

WORKING FAMILIES COALITION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It looks like my colleagues opposite are all riled up to help Michael Ignatieff today.

My question is to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member of the statement I just made. I sat down and she jumped right in.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the last provincial election, the former finance minister met with the Working Families Coalition. My question for the Premier today: Do you stand by the statements made by your spokesperson Christine McMillan to the Toronto Star that there are absolutely no connections between Ontario Liberals and the Working Families Coalition?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that this was a matter of an independent, impartial, objective review. An assessment was made; a determination was made; a response was given. We believe that finalizes the matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again to the Premier: She speaks on behalf of you and your party. Public accounts revealed last year that she made over $100,000 off of the Liberal caucus research bureau. So the question is very simple: Do you stand by the statement that Christine McMillan made that there are absolutely no connections between the Ontario Liberal Party and the Working Families Coalition? I'd like an answer.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we need to get to the nub of this. My honourable colleagues opposite would like to place some constraints on freedom of speech in Ontario. When people come together and decide they want to be critical of that party and their policies, what they've done and what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just think we need to be honest about this discussion. My honourable colleagues opposite are very concerned if Ontario citizens should assemble in groups, small or large, and launch criticisms directed at that party and their policies. They are unhappy with that. Well, that is a vital characteristic of a democracy and they're going to have to get used to that. From time to time, people are going to say that they don't like what they stand for.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The member from Welland.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final warning to the member from Renfrew. The honourable member right next to you from the third party was about to get up and speak.

Member from Welland.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: Why wasn't the Ministry of Labour getting the consent of its labour inspectors before it conducted secret criminal record searches on them?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Charles Sousa: First and foremost, we have a great deal of respect for our health and safety inspectors in this province. We've doubled them since coming to office, after massive cuts and disrespect from the Progressive Conservative government, and that was unacceptable.

There is a process that has occurred if an inspector is going to testify in a prosecution case, and that includes background checks before they appear before the court. The crown prosecutor can request criminal record checks and, as such, in this case, it's about balancing the rights of the defendants and the rights of the inspectors.

Working with the Ministry of Government Services, who are looking into what has happened, we're reviewing the decision made by the Grievance Settlement Board. As such, I have no further comment on the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Can this government assure this House that no other government employees are being subjected to surreptitious criminal record searches?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As mentioned, through the crown attorney they do request criminal checks. I am not going to comment as to what has taken place. Obviously, they occur on occasions with consent and so forth with the others involved.

I do want to, though, talk about our Ontario public servants, especially our inspectors, who have made our food, water, communities and workplaces safer. They've educated our children, and they keep our families safe and healthy. We have doubled the number of inspectors who are operating in our province; they do outstanding work, and we value the work of our employees. We do not want a return to the Walkerton tragedy or tainted meat scandals. We will continue to support our public servants.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, I have a constituent whose son was diagnosed with severe autism at 17 months. In February 2010, he began the intensive behavioural intervention, or IBI, program. After several months of excellent progress in the program, my constituent was informed that her son was being transitioned out of the program and into school.

My constituent fears for her son's progress now that he has been removed from the program. She is unsure of how she can see that his needs are supported and that he continues to make progress so that he can be a productive, happy, healthy member of society.

It's clear that kids are making progress with the IBI therapy. Will the minister tell us how we can ensure they are getting the support that they need?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for the question and his advocacy for this family, and I'm so pleased to know of the progress the constituent's son is making.

We've worked hard to make sure that all Ontario children will make that progress. Since 2003, we have removed the previous government's discriminatory age six cut-off and we've more than quadrupled autism investment and tripled the number of kids getting intensive behavioural intervention to over 1,400 kids, an increase of 164%.

To look for answers under the McGuinty government, we've committed more than $15 million to autism-related research, and we've increased supports in schools, training over 13,000 educators, and made transition teams available in every publicly funded school board across the province to help kids like your constituent's son make the transition from IBI into school.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. Those investments and programs are so critical to the families. I know that our government really has made an unprecedented investment in autism therapy and research, and that is something that we should be very proud of.

The unfortunate part seems to be that more and more kids are being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, and the need for IBI services continues to grow. Kids who have already progressed through the IBI program or whose autism is on the less severe end of the spectrum also deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential through programs that help them develop their social skills.

I have met with many parents who have told me that their children would benefit greatly from autism therapies. Can the minister tell us what our government is doing to support children who do not currently receive therapeutic interventions but who would benefit from doing so?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: We absolutely understand that parents want to know how their children are progressing and that they are receiving services to meet their needs. We are responding to the calls from parents and establishing an independent review process that will provide advice to us on these matters, and that's going to be operational this fall.

We listen to two groups when we make decisions: We listen to experts and we listen to parents. Parents and experts have told us that kids with autism, across the range of the spectrum, would benefit from a broader range of expanded services. That's why we're investing an additional $25 million annually to deliver applied behaviour analysis, or ABA-based skill-building interventions and support, that will benefit about 8,000 additional kids each year.

These new ABA therapies and services are in addition to the IBI services that are already being provided to 1,400 kids across the province.

We're always working hard to make progress. We continue to do that important work.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, as you know, an active lifestyle for our youth is crucially important. Some very talented youth in Burlington participate in a synchronized swim team. This team is composed of about 40 families; it's a small group. It rents the city's pool at a cost of about $90,000 a year.

Since your government's HST, the recreational rental fees have gone up and the cost increase for these families is over $200 a year.

Why do you continue to penalize hundreds of thousands of Ontario youth and their families with your HST?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member for the question. We have one of the most comprehensive tax packages for the people of Ontario. We have provided to families about $12 billion in tax cuts and tax credits. We want to make sure that all families receive the tax credits and the tax cuts they deserve. We want to make sure that families fill out their taxes this year, including families that are getting tax credits when it comes to recreation.

At the end of the day, this is all about jobs. We want to make sure we have a stronger Ontario, and that is investing in families and businesses in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Maybe the minister needs a refresher course in basic mathematics. Let's do the math:

A $50 tax credit does not cover an additional $200 a year to each of these families. You know what? Unlike the swim team, your credit is not in sync.

Your government boasted that the HST would be revenue neutral. It is not. An additional $200 due to HST, minus the $50 tax credit, still leaves a net cost of $150 for these families. Why do you continue to penalize Ontario families with your HST?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I respectfully disagree with the member opposite. When it comes to our children, we have a children's activity tax credit which helps families, $50 per child under the age of 16.

When we talk about a large, comprehensive tax package like the HST, I want to talk about some of the people who are supportive of this tax package—like someone who said, "The HST, which many people love to hate, is nonetheless good economic and tax policy if we want to create jobs in the province of Ontario. And you know what, it took some courage to do it."—John Tory, CivicAction summit, February 10, 2011.

We're committed to the people of Ontario. We will continue to keep investing. That's $12 billion to families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The minister gave to her hand-picked applicant a secret $118,000 contract to review the benchmarking process for terminating children's autism therapy.

Dr. Louise LaRose asserted that no psychological data from discharge assessments existed, as required by the ministry's guidelines for autism intervention before ending a child's IBI therapy.

Recently, the minister wrote a letter contradicting her own expert, stating that final assessments are always being done and that there is no benchmarking taking place.

If this is the case, why are so many parents reporting that benchmarks have been used to end their child's IBI therapy, and without the required and complete discharge assessments?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm glad that the leader of the third party has raised this question in the House, because I have to say, frankly, I was very disappointed to hear that the leader of the third party was recently distributing misinformation to parents about how kids are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask you to withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I withdraw.

The leader of the third party is releasing inaccurate information out into the field, and it's confusing parents.

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Let me be perfectly clear on this point: We have not implemented any of the proposed benchmarks for assessing progress, and all assessment decisions are clinical decisions. Every child who is being discharged from the IBI program must have a clinical assessment. We have reinforced this directive with our service providers.

This is the appropriate avenue. Our clinical experts should be making these decisions. We should not be playing politics with these important decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It seems to me that parents are not the confused ones; the minister is.

Parents are experiencing their kids being cut off for very suspicious reasons. The minister may choose to disbelieve her hired adviser, but she can't possibly dispute the reports from affected families across Ontario.

Viano and Maria Ciaglia are here today with their son Luca, who has autism. IBI worked wonders for six-year-old Luca, but he's being discharged without a final assessment. His parents paid out of pocket for Luca's IBI while he was on the wait-list. They know that if he loses his IBI, he will begin to regress.

They are financially exhausted and they are deeply, deeply worried. If benchmarking doesn't exist and if ministry guidelines are being followed, then why can't children in Ontario like Luca receive therapy while they continue to benefit from it?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The leader of the third party continues to play politics with this critically important issue. Our government is one that has made historic investments, significant investments in reducing the benchmark. We've removed the previous government's discriminatory age cut-off. We've more than quadrupled autism investments to over $186.6 million. We've expanded ABA supports, where 8,000 kids with ASD will benefit annually from these services who did not receive service before. We've tripled the number of kids getting intensive behaviour intervention and we've invested more than $15 million in autism-related research.

Transition teams are in place in every school across the province. We know that there is more work to do, but again, let me be perfectly clear: IBI assessments are done by way of clinical decisions. That's the appropriate forum to make those decisions and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Legislation was passed that will address the unique and specific transit needs of the city of Toronto. As members of this House know, on December 16, 2010, Toronto city council made a request through a motion, asking the province to designate public transit in Toronto as an essential service. The city motion stated: "Over one million Torontonians rely on the TTC to get to work, school and conduct their lives each day. The city of Toronto is simply not designed to function without an operating ... transit system."

Can the minister tell this House the major factors for agreeing with the city's request?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our government respects the right of the elected city council to speak on behalf of the people of Toronto. Our response to the city of Toronto's

request has taken into account the unique circumstances of Toronto and its public transit system.

The Toronto Transit Commission Labour Disputes Resolution Act, which prohibits strikes and lockouts at the TTC, passed yesterday in the House and addresses these unique circumstances. The TTC plays a critical role in the life of the city of Toronto and, indeed, in ensuring the health and safety of its people.

All parties in this House set a precedent on this issue five times unanimously. In 2008, the TTC strike began on a Friday night and was ended by the time Monday's rush hour began. By our actions in this House, we have responded to the TTC as an essential service.

City council has stated that TTC strikes are an economic, social—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Minister, some labour activists have expressed their concern that by declaring the TTC an essential service, our government is taking away the rights of workers to freely bargain. Will the minister tell us what the legislation actually does?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me first say that our government firmly believes in the right of collective bargaining. We know that the best collective agreements are those reached at the bargaining table. The legislation does not take away or limit the right to bargain; it only prohibits strikes and lockouts.

Binding arbitration is a neutral means to resolve bargaining impasses. It's the same basic means of resolving impasses used by our police, firefighters and hospital workers. Some 80% of those agreements don't go to arbitration.

The essential nature of the TTC in the life of Toronto is also made evident through a report that was commissioned and published by the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 113, in March 2008. It states, "Transit provides essential transportation, accessibility and equity for commuters ... reduces the medical and environmental costs of car dependence and provides intangible additional benefits of physical activity, reduced sprawl etc."

We value the men and women who work at the TTC. We all know that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of the Environment: Last May, the minister told his constituents in Wellington county that if a municipality did not sign off on a wind energy application, the government would not approve the project. He later backtracked, saying the municipality must only be consulted. Then he said a letter from the municipality was as good as a consultation.

On Monday, the same minister, in media reports, said that the eco tax mess his government created will not cost $18 million, as Stewardship Ontario indicated; rather, it will cost $8 million. How can the minister expect Ontario families to believe him when the story keeps changing?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'll tell you what story hasn't changed in the province of Ontario: That party over there has a love affair with dirty coal-fired generation. That is a fact.

When it comes to green energy, we believe in the province of Ontario that for a proponent to want to have a green energy project, whether it's biogas or solar or wind, they need to consult with the public first. They need to consult with the municipalities first. That is a requirement under the law.

When it comes to our ministry, we have received some 44 applications for renewable energy approvals. We have already rejected 23 of them because they have not done the required public and municipal consultation. We'll continue to hold those companies to that new high standard, and we will take consultation from the public or the municipalities in any form that they would like to render it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Minister of the Environment. After the Toronto Star reported Stewardship Ontario was seeking $18 million for the failed eco tax scheme, he said the numbers were wrong. When asked if it was $10 million, he said, "Nowhere near $10 million," but now the McGuinty government has agreed to pay $8 million.

The eco tax program was botched from the start. It even cost your predecessor his job. Considering the mess the McGuinty government has made of eco taxes, again, how can Ontario families believe these kinds of numbers now?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thought that was a bit of a meandering question, but let's get back to green energy.

I wonder if the member still agrees with what he said, which is that coal is "both affordable and abundant," and that "there are significant benefits." Well, I'll tell you, with all the children who end up going to emergency rooms in this province because of asthma, because of air pollution, and that this province owns the largest source of air pollution in North America—that source of air pollution needs to be shut down, and we will do what's required to improve air quality, because our children are counting on it. The people who suffer are the people who are already ill, the elderly and children. I would ask the other party opposite: Would you please get out of the 19th century and join us here in the 21st century? Let's ensure that our children have a greener future with cleaner air to breathe. That is what's important in this province.

Again, I say to people who have concerns about green energy that we will not make a decision unless the public and the municipalities have been consulted, and we will continue to take their feedback—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSERVATION

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. The city of Hamilton's recent amendment to the Stoney Creek

official plan to protect the Eramosa karst feeder lands from development so far hasn't been appealed. The city of Hamilton planning staff have cautioned that the province has left the door open for potential development of the feeder lands, and these loopholes are very concerning to me. Will the Premier, right now, commit to the city of Hamilton to close those serious loopholes that leave this land open to future development?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the Premier for giving me the opportunity to answer this question. At the same time, I want to be able to say, very genuinely, thanks to the member from Hamilton Mountain for the excellent work she has done with this.

1130

Those lands are going to be protected. The reality is, I have never heard from the member for Hamilton East with regard to this issue, but the member from Hamilton Mountain has been very, very vocal about this issue. She has ensured that this particular government understands the sensitivity around these lands and that we do the right thing. We will continue to do the right thing, thanks to the member from Hamilton Mountain.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Last week, the minister from Hamilton Mountain said that the government absolutely intends to donate the land by the Eramosa karst to the Hamilton Conservation Authority, now that it has backed off on plans for housing there, and said, "We want to protect this land. That's the bottom line."

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing accepted a new city official plan designating the 32 hectares of mostly open field to the immediate east of this national treasure as open space. This all sounds great, but to be sure, will the minister actually responsible for the lands transfer them immediately to the Hamilton Conservation Authority, no strings attached?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It's interesting—which is so typical of the third party. They're after the fact. We're working with the Hamilton Conservation Authority to arrange for a land lease or transfer of the provincially owned lands and to determine how the lands will be used and managed over the long term.

The reality is, thanks to the member from Hamilton Mountain, who has been directly involved in this, the concerns of the people of Hamilton are being heard. I want to thank that member again for her advocacy, for making sure that we understand the importance of these lands.

I am, of course, not surprised that finally the member from Hamilton East has spoken about this issue.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Two days ago, the Minister of Finance delivered the government's budget for Ontario. In one of his opening lines, the minister said, "The 2011 budget identifies over 20 new initiatives to drive change and reform" in Ontario's public service.

One point that stuck with me was that our government required several government agencies in the broader public sector organizations to reduce the cost of the executive offices by 10% over two years. I know that my constituents would like to know more about this and how it will contribute to balancing the budget while maintaining a high quality of education and other crucial government services.

Would the minister tell us what the government hopes to achieve by reducing executive offices by 10% over the next number of years?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I thank the member from Peterborough for asking this question. He's absolutely right: We are moving ahead to reduce expenditures in the broader public sector. All of the organizations covered under this restraint will reduce their expenditures by 10% over a period of two years. This will help us to not only balance the budget, but more importantly, to preserve our very important services like health care and education.

The organizations covered by this initiative include the hospitals, the colleges, the universities, the LHINs, and also the community care access corporations and 21 of our largest government agencies. We are moving ahead to reduce the executive expenditures by 10% in these organizations so that we can move towards balancing the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know these measures will go a long way to help fight the deficit without recklessly taking a chainsaw to the crucial services Ontarians elected us to protect.

The Minister of Finance also mentioned that approximately 20 measures would help reduce costs and allow for investments in our future growth.

Constituents in Peterborough have praised our government's move to find savings in these difficult times, and appreciate the efforts we have made over the past seven years to replace private consultants with highly skilled and efficient full-time staff.

I recall that in the 2009 budget we committed to reducing the size of the OPS by 5%, and I'm told we're on track to achieving that goal by March 2012. Can the minister please describe for my constituents how a further reduction of 1,500 OPS employees will affect the valuable government services that millions of Ontario families and Peterborough families depend on each and every day?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member again for asking the question. We are on track to reduce our OPS by 5%. We also have a plan to reduce it by another 1,500 people in the OPS. These 1,500 employees are over and above the 5% target that we already achieved or that we are on target to achieve. When this is fully implemented, it will save us about $500 million going forward.

I also want to assure Ontarians that public services will not be impacted, as we will be doing this by attrition

and also by improving the productivity and the efficiency of the public service as we move forward. We have great faith in our Ontario public service because it provides great service to all Ontarians.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Premier. "High-Risk Sex Offender to Live in City," February 5 of this year; "Cadets to Bar Sex Offenders from Working in Organization," February 23 of this year; "Multiple Child Molester Guilty Once Again," March 1 of this year; and the list goes on and on and on.

Premier, earlier this week we passed second reading of Bill 163. Earlier this month, I was asked once again to be a keynote speaker at the lacrosse Ontario annual general meeting on the bill that I'm trying to bring forward regarding protection of kids in sports.

The legislation that's being brought out in Bill 163 will have no impact on background checks for individuals in the province of Ontario to ensure that those individuals who should be working with kids are working with kids. Organizations are asking me on a regular basis to come forward to give them guidance and direction and to make sure that we, as a province, can work together.

Premier, what is it that you're willing to do to protect our kids and those organizations in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's interesting; Ontario's sex offender legislation was and is leading legislation throughout Canada. In fact, it was legislation that finally spurred the federal government to make the recent changes that they made to make sure that extended protection was granted in their areas of jurisdiction.

We're taking further steps through this piece of legislation to make sure that there is no doubt, no question, that the protections which must be afforded to Ontarians are afforded.

I don't know what my friend is referring to, because background checks are being undertaken. People are being checked out. Ontarians are being protected. There are, in fact, thousands of checks done every year by police throughout the province of Ontario. Those who seek to work with children must undergo extended background checks for the protection of the people of this province.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to welcome back to the Legislature, here for the model Parliament, former page Myriam Faucher, a student of Algonquin secondary school. It's a pleasure to have her back at the Legislature today.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With reference to standing order 23(f), the subject of the point of order is the increasingly frequent reflection by members on previous votes of the House. This happens most frequently during question period, and while I can see that, from time to time, opposition members have breached this standing order, the most frequent breach of the standing order is by members of the executive who, while responding to questions, would refer to votes and how particular members or caucuses voted from time to time on any number of bills passed.

I refer the Speaker to the text The Procedure of the House of Commons: A Study of Its History and Present Form, by Josef Redlich, volume 3, page 58:

"Another regulation having the same praiseworthy object is that a member is not allowed to speak against or reflect upon any previous determination of the House during the current session except on a motion for rescinding it. There are solid grounds for such a rule."

1140

I refer you to Bourinot, in this particular instance, the fourth edition, although there are other editions which have similar commentary, on page 329: "The latter part of the 19th rule of the House of Commons provides: 'No member may reflect upon any vote of the House except for the purpose of moving that such vote be rescinded.'"

I refer you, sir, to Beauchesne, and we'll start with the fourth edition, citation 124(3), page 113: "A member may not speak against or reflect upon any determination of the House unless he intends to conclude with a motion for rescinding it."

I refer you to Beauchesne, edition five, where at citation 319(3) it's written, "In the House of Commons a member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections on the House itself ... or to reflect upon, argue against or in any manner call in question the past acts and proceedings of the House, or to speak in abusive and disrespectful terms of an act of Parliament."

As well, in the most recent edition, sixth edition of Beauchesne, citation 479 on page 141: "A member may not speak against or reflect upon any determination of the House, unless intending to conclude with a motion for rescinding it."

The Speaker will know that standing order 18 of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons contains, as the final part of that standing order, "No member may reflect upon any vote of the House, except for the purpose of moving that such vote be rescinded."

This, of course, is the same language as is used in standing order 23(f) of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. That reads, "A member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:

"(f) Reflects upon any previous vote of the House unless it is the member's intention to move that it be rescinded."

O'Brien and Bosc, second edition, at page 617: "Members may not speak against or reflect upon any decision of the House. This stems from the well-established rule which holds that a question, once put and carried in the affirmative or negative, cannot be questioned again."

I then refer you, sir, to a number of rulings by the Speaker of the House of Commons. These rulings are referred to in footnote 174 on page 617 of the second edition of O'Brien and Bosc.

May 19, 1960: "Mr. Speaker: I find myself in some difficulty about this because, as I recall the practice of the House, it does not criticize its own decisions, and in effect what the honourable member is doing by raising this point as a question of privilege is reflecting on the vote which the House took yesterday with respect to the production of this document."

October 20, 1970: There was a reference by a member, Mr. Winch, to a vote that had been taken yesterday. The Acting Speaker, Mr. Laniel, says, in part, "At this time, I think I should remind the honourable member for Timmins (Mr. Roy) that he may comment on the situation and the events that have occurred, but he may not be permitted to reflect on the vote taken by this House or any position taken by members of the House." It's the latter part of that that's very specific.

And once again, further on, the Acting Speaker, Mr. Laniel, asked the honourable member from Timmins to withdraw that part of his remarks; that is the part referring or reflecting on the vote by another member or another group of members.

May 11, 1983, Acting Speaker Corbin: "Order. I must draw to the attention of the honourable member standing order 39"—as it was then—"which reads: 'No member shall speak disrespectfully—' And the last sentence of that paragraph reads: 'No member may reflect upon any vote of the House, except for the purpose of moving that such vote be rescinded.' Therefore I would ask that the honourable member choose his words very carefully with respect to a procedure which occurred in this House at an earlier time."

May 4, 1993: "Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Kamloops knows it is completely improper to question the motivation of a vote of an honourable member."

April 6, 1995: "The Speaker: Colleagues, we are all aware of the traditions of the House that we do not refer in any way to a vote that has been taken in the House. I would hope that the honourable member is not going in that direction. May I gently caution the honourable member not to mention any votes, reflect on any votes, or the way members voted in the House."

Similarly, April 6, 1995, later during that same sitting: "The Speaker: As I explained earlier, we have a tradition in the House of not referring to any votes taken in the House or how members have voted. I ask honourable members to please be cognizant of this in framing their questions and also in giving their answers."

September 24, 1996, the Acting Speaker: "Let me remind the House that we cannot reflect on a vote previously taken in the House."

May 11, 1999, the Deputy Speaker: "It is certainly contrary to the standing orders to reflect on a vote in the House."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You're going to get to your theme?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes. I want that theme to be as strong as possible because it bolsters the argument. I want the Speaker to sense a trend as well as a theme.

Finally, on September 16, 2003: "The Speaker: The honourable member knows that the rules of the House prohibit any reflection on a vote in the House. The vote has taken place so I am afraid he is out of luck."

I suspect that there are other references that could be made to Hansards, but I don't believe that they're necessary. Those references are from the House of Commons.

I put to you that the standing order is very, very clear. It is historical as a practice, as a custom, as a rule of the House. It's been codified in the standing orders of the House of Commons and in the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly. I put to you that it is improper for any member to refer to another member's vote, identifying how that member voted or, even more so, to suggest their motivation for voting in that way.

I accept that the enforcement of this standing order will require the diligence of opposition members as well as government members. But I welcome your ruling and I welcome the opportunity to exercise that same diligence. It's my submission to you that you should find that it is improper and contrary to the standing orders to refer to votes made by any member of the House. As I say, I'm referring particularly to the frequent use of that tactic in the answers given to questions put by members of the opposition during question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on the same point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the House leader of the third party bringing forth this very valid point of order this morning.

I, too, share his concerns. We see this increasingly being used, as the member said, particularly by members of the executive council when answering questions during the period we call question period.

I can understand completely the logic of this standing order. Let me read it again. It is that you're not allowed to reflect "upon any previous vote of the House unless it is the member's intention to move that it be rescinded." We can understand why, because the voting on every particular bill or motion in this House is a matter of public record, but it stands on its own as recorded in Hansard, not to be used as a tool by the members of the government to perhaps try to confuse the context associated with that vote. That seems to be the modis operandi of members of the cabinet when they're answering questions, to say, "And that member voted against it." I've never once heard members of the cabinet stand up and say, "And that member voted for it."

You see, the vote, as recorded in the public record, talks about the bill. It will show the vote and how each member voted on it. But when they're doing it in the context of debate here, it is so easy to try to throw that

out there in an attempt to actually confuse what may have been the intention of the member when they voted.

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That's why I think the standing order exists, or at least part of the logic, because many of those votes are portions that may have been included in a bill, maybe even an omnibus bill, where the member never, ever had the opportunity to judge the merits of that particular piece of the bill on its own, because the government chose not to deal with them on an individual basis but chose to deal with them on a collective basis. So I think the standing order exists there for very valid reasons.

I would ask, Speaker, that you would look carefully at the point of order being raised by the member from Welland and the third party House leader today, and I ask that you listen carefully as to the way that the members of the cabinet, in my opinion, take significant liberties when this standing order is being considered.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this point of order today. It's been a little while since the member for Welland has brought us up to date on his view on the standing orders, so I think it only appropriate that we take the time today to look at standing order 23(f), which reads: "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she reflects upon any previous vote of the House unless it is the member's intention to move that it be rescinded."

I think in the past, this rule has often been used in order to ensure that members do not circumvent the rule about speaking of members' attendance in the House; whether or not they attended could be reflected by how they voted on a particular issue. I'm not going to address all of the precedents, some dated far before I was born, that the member from Welland raised. I will, however, draw to your attention O'Brien, second edition, which was produced in 2009, page 617.

The member for Welland quoted from this particular text; however, he stopped when it was convenient for him. I would like to actually give a more fulsome quote from the text: "In the past, reference to prior debates of the current session were generally discouraged in order to conserve the time of the House and to prevent members from reviving a debate that had concluded, unless the remarks were relevant to the matter under discussion." I would suggest that how people have voted in the past can be directly relevant to a matter under discussion in the House if they are raising, in fact, an issue that is being discussed in the House.

However, this is the point I wanted to raise with you: "Today, the Speaker's attention is rarely, if ever, drawn to breaches of this rule. Generally, members should not quote from their former speeches or from the speeches of their colleagues made during the current session; the rule does not apply to speeches on different stages of a bill. Direct reference is permitted, however, when a member wishes to complain of something said or to clear up a misrepresentation or make a personal explanation.

"Members may not speak against or reflect upon a decision of the House. This stems from the well-established rule which holds that a question, once put and carried in the affirmative or negative, cannot be questioned again." However, I don't believe that in referencing how people voted, we are actually questioning the vote. We are questioning, perhaps, how that individual voted, but we're not questioning the decision of the House. I would distinguish, therefore, some of the rulings that have been made by previous Speakers.

I would, too, Mr. Speaker, just in closing, draw to your attention a doctrine in the law which I think could be somewhat drawn into our context here in the House, which is the clean hands doctrine. I think we all know that the clean hands doctrine in the law requires that we come to complaint in the courts with clean hands, not having previously violated other rules. I would draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, that standing order 23 contains a number of subsections, not the least of which is subsection (b): "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she directs his or her speech to matters other than the question under discussion." I think many in this House would agree with me that the member from Welland is actually notorious for speaking about issues that have in no way been brought up in this House, and continues to violate standing order 23(b), some days with impunity and sometimes very entertainingly, but in fact is violating standing order 23(b).

Standing order 23(c) requires that "a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she persists in needless repetition or raises matters that have been decided during the current session." In fact, I think there was evidence this morning, in this actual standing order, of what could be deemed as needless repetition. Again, I would note that the member from Welland is probably not lily-white on that particular standing order as well.

Finally, 23(e), where a member "anticipates any matter already on the Orders and Notices paper for consideration." Seriously, in this context, there are many issues that are on the order paper, including this morning: The member from Oshawa raised a question about a private member's bill that he has on the order paper that has not yet been up for debate, and it would be considered inappropriate, according to the standing orders, to raise that in debate here in the House.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that you have some latitude with respect to standing orders and how you rule in the House. We respect your rulings in this House and we defer to your judgment. I would argue that there has been a great deal of latitude shown to a number of these rules under the standing orders, especially 23(b), (c) and (e). Those are the only ones I chose to highlight today in order to contain this debate to some brevity, and I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that your rulings up to this point have been appropriate with respect to 23(f).

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I feel compelled to take this opportunity to confess that I have, in fact, over the course of

23 years, breached every one of those requirements but for paragraph (l); I've never spoken disrespectfully of Her Majesty the Queen. But as for the others, I've been called to order frequently, expelled from the House, chastised, admonished. I rise today as somebody who is experienced as to what constitutes a breach of a standing order, and I submit to you, sir, that that ought to give my argument a little more credibility than perhaps the oh-so-innocent government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the three House leaders for their comments: the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member from Welland and the government House leader. I feel that it is an important point that has been raised and it's not one that I'm prepared to make a decision on today. I would like to reflect on what has been said. There have been a number of references made, and I will reserve my decision.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have the great pleasure today to introduce to you some distinguished guests from the Turkish-Canadian community, and they are as follows, from left to right: Mr. Azim Shamshiev, who's the director of the Intercultural Dialogue Institute; Mr. Fatih Yegul, who's the executive director of the Anatolian Heritage Federation; Mr. Mehmet Budak, who's the director of the Turkish Canadian Chamber of Commerce; and Mr. Sukan Alkin, who's principal of the Nil Academy.

Mr. Speaker, if I might, I'd like to invite all the members of this Legislature to an important meeting today at 2:30 in committee room 2. They will be there, and they will extend a terrific invitation to all of you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FARMLAND

Mr. Randy Hillier: In 2005, this McGuinty government introduced its provincial policy statement, which focused on protecting farmland across the province. The government argued that farmland was so invaluable to the future of this province that it needed to be protected from development. But today, the government is using the Green Energy Act to not only raise hydro prices but also to circumvent municipal zoning and planning to drop its green energy projects wherever they see fit.

In my riding, the McGuinty Liberals have approved the Little Creek solar project. This project is on land that has been approved for development and designated as class 1 and 2 prime farmland.

This government is either confused or hypocritical. Edmund Burke once wrote, "Hypocrisy can afford to be"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment he just made, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw. I'm not sure—oh.

Edmund Burke once wrote, and I quote, "Hypocrisy can afford to be magnificent in its promises, for never intending to go beyond promise"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment as well, notwithstanding the fact that he is quoting.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw. Burke was wrong about only one thing. The McGuinty Liberals'—"blank"—is costing Ontario families more with every passing day.

This is yet another Liberal backtrack. The McGuinty Liberals said it was crucial to protect the province's supply of prime farmland from further development. Now it seems that statement only holds true when we're talking about Liberal-held—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Welland.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. If I say anything unparliamentary, I withdraw in advance.

I'm told by my staff that as of March 2010, there are 56 electric retailer licences in the province of Ontario and 39 gas marketer licences. These operators are ripping people off left and right in every part of the province of Ontario, and our gutted, hence gutless, consumer protection ministry is doing nothing to protect Ontarians from these predators.

They are signing people up with false promises of lower electricity rates or lower natural gas rates, if that's the subject matter, and then these customers find themselves paying double what they would pay from their local hydro utility. My staff in my constituency office, and I suspect other members' staff, are similarly preoccupied, spending far too much time writing to these foul companies and asking them to break contracts without the huge penalties that they impose on people who have been victimized by them.

One of those companies is Summit Energy Management Inc. on Milverton Drive in Mississauga. Gerry Haggarty of that company shouldn't have "CEO" after his name; he should have "Millhaven" or "Warkworth" after his name, because these guys, in view of what they're doing to Ontarians, belong in jail, not in some fancy office with thick, plush broadloom.

I call on this government to restore some of the innards to its ministry of consumer protection and start protecting consumers here in the province of Ontario.

SHOUTER BAPTISTS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the

National Evangelical Spiritual Baptist faith, also known as Shouter Baptists.

Shouter Baptists were established in Trinidad and Tobago on March 26, 1945. At the time, the diocese was forbidden to practise its religion. Shouter Baptists were liberated on March 30, 1951, when Trinidad and Tobago repealed the ordinance which outlawed the practice of the Shouter Baptist faith.

Shouter Baptists have been in Toronto since 1974. The head church for Shouter Baptists is located at 63 Mack Avenue, in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. Under the leadership of Her Grace Archbishop Dr. Deloris Seiveright, the Canadian archdiocese has flourished. Today, there are eight congregations in Canada that represent the Evangelical Spiritual Baptist faith.

Shouter Baptists not only preach the word of God, but also teach members of their congregation to empower themselves both spiritually and morally by feeding the poor, visiting the sick, giving guidance to our youth and serving the needs of our community.

Please join me in commemorating the national Evangelical Spiritual Baptist faith on their 60th anniversary of liberation, and in congratulating the church and Archbishop Seiveright for contributing to the religious diversity that is ever so present in the community and riding of Scarborough Southwest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and God bless everyone.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr. Ted Arnott: Ambulance response times continue to be a major concern in the eastern part of Wellington county. Even the case of a woman in Erin waiting over an hour for an ambulance on a frigid January night has not moved this government to act. Repeatedly, I've called on the Minister of Health to solve this problem.

Since the city of Guelph disbanded the joint land ambulance committee, county taxpayers have not been represented when it comes to this important local service. The city of Guelph must recognize its obligation to be a good neighbour to county residents.

Once again, I urge the minister to issue a directive to the city of Guelph that they reconstitute the joint ambulance committee and allow the county of Wellington its rightful voice in the management of this important local service. The Minister of Health has the authority to broker a solution to the ambulance impasse.

Ever since this became an issue for the people of Erin and Guelph/Eramosa township, I've been writing letters, including an open letter to the Minister of Health, and speaking in the Legislature. I've even spoken directly with the minister. Exactly one year ago this week, I urged the minister to become involved in this issue and broker a solution to the ambulance impasse. Even though lives could potentially be at risk, she has refused to act. She could solve this by making a phone call. How can she possibly defend her indifference?

We need her to show leadership. We need her to tell the city of Guelph to recognize and respect its neighbour, and return to the long-standing tradition of city/county co-operation which for so many years was the norm in our municipal relations.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I would like to take this opportunity to share with my colleagues the great news for the students of Bramalea–Gore–Malton that was delivered by way of the 2011 Ontario budget. The budget reiterated our announcement of the expansion of full-day kindergarten to 25 schools in Bramalea–Gore–Malton by 2012, making room for 3,300 four- and five-year-olds.

Full-day kindergarten gives our youngest students the tools needed to succeed in their school careers and helps parents find the affordable child care they need to balance their commitment to family and work.

Budget 2011 also announced 60,000 new spaces in our colleges and universities, promising that every qualified student in Ontario will have the opportunity to pursue their dreams and full potential.

In building a world-class education system, Ontario is opening the door to a brighter tomorrow. We are building a workforce that is competitive in the global knowledge-based economy and we are creating high-value jobs right here in this province called Ontario.

JOHN DRINKWATER SIBBALD III

Mrs. Julia Munro: On March 28, a very distinguished local resident of Georgina, John Drinkwater Sibbald III, received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement. He was nominated for this award by the town of Georgina to recognize 25 years or more of exceptional contributions as a heritage volunteer.

John Sibbald is an environmentalist and a patron of the arts. He is a founding member of the Lake Simcoe Tourist Association, the York Region Tourist Board and the Lake Simcoe Arts Foundation. He was also governor of the Canadian Coalition on Acid Rain.

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Mr. Sibbald is a successful local businessman who has made a major contribution to the development of our local economy and social life, in addition to his work preserving our local heritage.

His work includes chairing fundraising for the hospital in Newmarket and serving as a member of the local school board and as a past executive director of the renowned Red Barn Theatre. He is a past officer of the Kinsmen Club and warden of St. George's Anglican Church in Sutton.

I am proud to have known John Sibbald as a friend and mentor for many years, and I offer him my sincerest congratulations and thanks on behalf of the community.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I was pleased to see that the 2011 budget contained new funding support for our farmers.

The McGuinty government is helping farmers by extending the current pilot risk management program for grains and oilseeds. We're also creating new risk management programs for cattle, hog, sheep and veal farmers, as well as a self-directed risk management program for the edible horticultural sector. These programs help farmers offset losses caused by low commodity prices. It gives them stability.

We think this is an important, necessary investment in the people who grow the good things we eat every day, and Ontario farmers agree. The Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition said, "The establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action" we could have taken in the budget.

Wilma Jeffray, chair of Ontario Pork, said, "The McGuinty government's decision to move forward on risk management programs during these tough fiscal times, and without the participation of the federal government, makes this announcement that much more significant to Ontario farmers."

The introduction of these programs continues our government's record of supporting farmers. Since coming into office, we've provided over $2 million in farm income supports. We are proud of our farmers and the invaluable work they do, and we're proud to provide them with a program they can count on.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: The province of Ontario and the Canadian nation have prospered through the courage and industry of Canadians of Hispanic origin who have come to this land in search of freedom and opportunity. We are especially mindful today of the important contributions that our citizens of Hispanic ancestry have made to our province and country since first arriving here in Canada. That is why we voted unanimously in 2010 to proclaim every April Hispanic Heritage Month.

Hispanic Canadians trace their origins to 22 countries. They came from Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela.

This proclamation of April as Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to recognize and to learn about the contributions Canadians of Hispanic heritage have made to Canada—in fact, to the world—in music, art, literature and films, in our economy, and science and medicine. That's why I'm very proud today to tell you—and if you will permit me to say just a few words in Spanish—

Remarks in Spanish.

I want to thank everyone who is of Spanish heritage for helping us to grow a better Canada.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Dave Levac: Like most Ontarians, I was very happy to see the increased commitment to children's mental health in the budget of 2011. Our government has always been committed to creating a mental health and addictions system that provides the right supports to people when they need them, as close to home as possible.

We have increased funding by more than 74% to build capacity outside of the traditional institutional settings. We've also provided $400 million for child and youth mental health each year.

We have commissioned a special advisory group of experts on mental health, and they stated that Ontario is on the right track, but there's more to do. Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, affordable housing strategy and full-day learning program are the types of investments that contribute to healthier, more resilient people and communities.

However, despite all these investments, the report released this summer by the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions taught us that our mental health and addictions supports need to be even better, and I agree. People, especially children, are falling through the cracks, and that is just not acceptable.

I thank the hard work of the all-party committee for their recommendations. The proposed new investment of $257 million for children's mental health will help plug those gaps that exist in our current system, something that we're all proud of. It is the largest investment in Ontario's youngest and most vulnerable citizens in decades, according to the CEO of Children's Mental Health.

A friend of mine, Bill Sanderson, the executive director of the St. Leonard's Society of Brant, says this: "This addiction/mental health announcement is one of the best I've heard in my 37-year career."

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): First, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome a good friend of mine, David Kerr, sitting in the west gallery. David is president of the St. Thomas and District Labour Council. Welcome to Queen's Park today, David.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM TARGETED ADVERTISING OF UNHEALTHY FOOD AND DRINK), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR (PROTECTION DES ENFANTS CONTRE LA PUBLICITÉ CIBLÉE À L'ÉGARD DES ALIMENTS ET DES BOISSONS MALSAINS)

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to protect children from targeted advertising and inducements with respect to unhealthy food and drink / Projet de loi 175, Loi visant à protéger les enfants contre la publicité ciblée et les incitatifs à l'égard des aliments et des boissons malsains.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The bill amends the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, to prohibit advertising of unhealthy food and drink that is directed at persons under 13 years of age.

Unhealthy food and drink is defined to include food or drinks that are prescribed by regulation as being unhealthy. Various guidelines are to be taken into consideration when prescribing what food or drink is unhealthy, and various factors are to be taken into consideration when determining whether particular advertising is directed to persons under 13 years of age.

The bill amends the act to allow the director to order a person to cease advertising if, after receiving and making inquiries about a complaint, the director believes on reasonable grounds that the person is making use of commercial advertising of unhealthy food or drink that is directed at persons under 13 years of age in contravention of the act.

Currently, a person is guilty of an offence under the act if the person fails to comply with any order or requirement under the act. The bill amends the act to specify that a person is guilty of an offence if the person fails to comply with the prohibition of commercial advertising of unhealthy food or drink that is directed at persons under 13 years of age.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has assented to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission / Loi prévoyant le règlement des conflits de travail à la Commission de transport de Toronto.

An Act to proclaim Ukrainian Heritage Day / Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine ukrainien.

An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month / Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine néerlandais.

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2011.

PETITIONS

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

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"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the" province of Ontario "take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine" on Lakeridge Road or Morgans Road in my riding of Durham.

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to one of the pages.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that was delivered to me by Wyman MacKinnon from my riding, from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. It reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric

of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;"

We petition "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

These are 1,139 signatures that I support. I will ask Sydney to bring it to the Clerk.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I agree with this petition. I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township:

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found $12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a very large petition here prepared by the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

It's also written in French, and I would just like to read the "therefore" in French:

« Par conséquent, nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'adopter une loi interdisant le remplacement temporaire de travailleurs pendant une grève ou un lock-out. »

I give it to Sydney to deliver.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

As I agree with the petition, I will sign it and send it to the table with Gemma.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine" and other areas in Ontario; "and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and pass it to page Madelaine to take to the table.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have a petition that has been delivered to me by B. Fowley. It reads as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws exist in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Jia Jia to deliver it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased, on behalf of the hard-working member for Niagara Falls, to present this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

It's signed by a number of different people, mostly from the Niagara Peninsula. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Riley to carry it for me.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting" over "$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians, including the people of Elmvale."

I agree with this and I will sign it.

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DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have a petition that was delivered to me by Tony Sottile, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under" certain conditions; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, insured PET scans are being performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Kiruthika—I practised it—to bring it to the Clerk.

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have received a number of petitions from Mr. Diaz. This is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for seniors. It reads as follows:

"Whereas seniors who are disabled and/or ill are presently suffering at home; and

"Whereas the cost of a caregiver, on a monthly basis, who looks after a senior in their own home is around $1,200 (including room and board)" per month; and

"Whereas the cost of taking care of someone at home is at least 10 times less than the cost of a hospital bed; and

"Whereas most seniors with disabilities and/or illness are crowding an already overburdened health care system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly request that a basic government subsidy be established (based on a doctor's evaluation) which will pay at least a minimum allowance for a caregiver.

"Seniors deserve to live at home as long and as independently as possible."

I agree with this petition, I will sign it and I'm sending it to you with page Ciaran.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

Mr. Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports / Projet de loi 86, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs qui participent à des sports amateurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "High-Risk Sex Offender to Live in City," February 5 of this year; "Multiple Child Molester Guilty Once Again," March 1 of this year; "Cadets to Bar Sex Offenders from Working in Organization," February 23 of this year; "High-Risk Pedophile Released from Jail," January 27; "RCMP Case with Sex Offender Sparks City Review," March 1 of this year; "Vancouver Police Seek High-Risk Sex Offender," February 27; "Sex Offender Charged," February 27; "Old Rape Lands Sex Offender Seven Years," February 24; "Teens Sexually Assaulted"; "Sex Predator Took Her Childhood," February 24; and "Oshawa Man Jailed for Sex Abuse of Daughter, Stepdaughter," February 22.

Before I continue on with the intent of this bill, I must say that there are thousands or tens of thousands of volunteers out there working with kids in sport, and this in no way, shape or form is to do anything but to ensure that those individuals are recognized for the great contribution that they're making to our community and our society as a whole as a volunteer in developing kids' lifestyles in a fashion that we, as Ontarians and Canadians, would like to see throughout our great country. The intention of the legislation is for that very small—very small—number of individuals out there who are slipping through the cracks and targeting kids.

I'm one of those individuals who volunteers with those hundreds of thousands of individuals in the province of Ontario, and millions throughout Canada, quite frankly, who spend thousands and thousands of hours giving of their time. I coach kids' hockey and have for over a decade. Not only that, but I was also the abuse reporting officer for the Frankford Senior A and the Ontario Senior A hockey league.

Here is something this week from my own son's school, from the Durham District School Board:

"Dear parents and guardians,

"There is nothing more important than the safety of our students. With the arrival of spring and students outside enjoying the sun, this is an opportune time to review safety guidelines. At school, we emphasize safety practices on a daily basis and we are writing to ask for your continued assistance in reinforcing good safety habits with your children. We are also writing as a result of an incident reported in the area of Simcoe Street North and Russett Avenue. You can read more about this specific incident on the Durham Regional Police website."

March 28—just this week. These are the things that are happening and affecting our kids over generations. It's not something that just happens, and it doesn't end there.

I have to tell you how this came about. You see, when I was in grade 6—and one of the things that I've been blessed or cursed with is a memory, because you remember the good things but you also remember the bad things. I recall that in grade 6 we had a change in principal at that time, and my father said to me, "Whatever you do, you stay away from that principal. You don't go near him. You don't spend any time with him. You don't be alone with him in any way, shape or form." Now, Dad was a police officer, and for those who know police officers and their intent, when they go into cop mode, it's a little bit of a different lifestyle. I looked down and I said, "Well, why is that, Dad?" He looked at me and said, "Because I said so." At that point there, I knew you don't ask any more questions.

About two years later, when I was in grade 8, I asked, "Dad, do you remember in grade 6 when you told me to stay away from that individual?" He said, "Oh, yeah." I said, "Well, why was that?" He said because he had arrested him for sexually molesting a 14-year-old boy in Continental Massage in downtown Oshawa, and there was nothing that he could do at that time to remove him from his ability to continue on with his practice in abusing kids. Quite frankly, that individual went to prison 20 years after I left that school.

I must say that I was never one of the individuals who ever had an occurrence, because I did as Dad said and stayed away and did the things that I should have done, but there were other kids who weren't as fortunate.

When I was first elected in 1995 and had the privilege and honour, we were told at that time, and I recall our whip, Mr. Turnbull, saying to us—and everything was critical, as I'm sure you're aware, Mr. Speaker—that we had to report all our private members' bills to the whip's office to make sure there weren't any problems. I brought forward, at that time, my private member's bill, which was—guess what?—to deal with something that I recall that happened when I was in grade 8, when my father had told me there wasn't anything that could be done, and I said, "That's not right, and if I ever get a chance to do something about it, I will." So I brought forward a bill at that time, and back and forth—badgering and posturing taking place. Eventually, guess what? The province of Ontario ended up with a sex offender registry bill to try to address this issue.

I thought that took care of many of the aspects that would cause problems or concerns in the province of Ontario until later on in life, when I was once again working with kids, coaching kids' hockey—instructional hockey. Instructional hockey is where you have two coaches; the head coach chooses whether he's on the bench or on the ice. I chose to be on the ice with the kids. After the game, I was walking out and one of the parents came up to me and said, "Mr. Ouellette, I need to talk to you."

I said, "Yes?"

They said, "You see that person out there, that referee? They shouldn't be on the ice with those kids."

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I said, "Well, what do you mean?"

"I can't tell you."

"Well, I don't understand. Why?"

"Mr. Ouellette, that individual should not be out on the ice with those kids."

Well, in order to protect the identity of the individual, I won't go into the details of the background, but they said that because of their position of employment they knew for a fact that that individual should in no way, shape or form be around kids.

I did my due diligence and ran through our checks and our backgrounds, as all of us elected officials have contacts, and guess what? Lo and behold, coming back from the police department was a statement that—let me put it this way: That individual would never be around my son in any way, shape or form.

So I started to check, and lo and behold, I went to the referees' association because the person they were talking about was a referee on the ice with kids. These kids are four, five and six years old and, quite frankly, I try to instill respect in those kids; to make sure that those kids—if one of the referees said to one of my players, "Son, I want to talk to you for a sec," that player would have marched off because of the respect that I try to instill with those kids. So I had a concern. Not only that, but kids can start refereeing at the age of 12.

So I did a background check and, lo and behold, multiple sex convictions by this individual. I went to the referees' association and I said, "Guys, we've got a problem here. We have to do something about this." I explained the individual, the background and the information; they looked and me and they said, "Jerry, what are you talking about? Don't you know this guy is a police officer?" I looked at them and I shook my head and I said, "Guys, don't you understand? He's been convicted of impersonating a police officer and he's out there with kids." And they went, "Oh my God, we've got to do something about this."

As a result of that, the Canadian Hockey League implemented processes by which anybody who works with kids—managers, trainers, coaches, referees, any of the officials—have to have a background check. What this does is it's a vulnerable persons check, to make sure that those individuals who are out there working with kids should be out there working with kids.

Not only that; I can say that that individual has since been deported from the province of Ontario and the country of Canada and is no longer in Canada, to my knowledge—protecting kids in one more way.

I said, "We have to do something about this. How do we move forward with addressing this issue?" So I came to the great legislative researchers that we have here and my staff, and we came up with a plan to try and identify how we can protect kids from those identified individuals in sports in the province of Ontario. Hence, we came forward with a bill that essentially requires a background check or a vulnerable persons check that is submitted to the leagues for their review, so that due diligence is done, so that these leagues can look and find out, "Guess what? We have an individual who has got multiple drinking and driving offences here. Do we want that individual driving kids to hockey games?" Because my kids are playing from Kingston to Barrie, out of Oshawa. That's a long distance, and I'm not so sure I want somebody there—or somebody who has been charged or convicted with drug trafficking. It's not just sex offences that are looked at, but it's whether these individuals should be around kids in any way, shape or form.

This is the third time that I've brought this bill forward to the Legislature. Things are happening out there, and organizations are coming to me—I know the Canadian Ski Patrol came forward after the first reading of the bill and said, "This is a good idea and we're going to implement this to make sure that our patrollers are protected." Because not only are you trying to eliminate the bad ones, but you're trying to show the good ones who are out there. I know Minister Phillips has been a coach for over 30 years and participated and done a great job out there with kids. We want to make sure that those individuals aren't painted with a bad brush; that those one-in-100,000 individuals out there aren't giving us a bad name.

Not only that, but on March 5 of this year the Ontario Lacrosse Association asked me to be a keynote speaker at their annual general meeting. The reason for that was because they wanted to move forward with this file and they were looking for guidance and direction on how they can do it.

You see, when we started doing the research about it, we started looking at hockey, and the legislative researchers here said, "Hey, wait a sec. Why do we limit it to hockey? Why don't we look at all the sports that are out there in the province of Ontario?" So we did. We started to do research and we found that there was a wide gamut of those who are complying and those who have no compliance at all.

In northwestern Ontario there were a number of hockey leagues that had been doing it for decades now and never had a problem. They have it set up so that once every five years, an individual has to have a background check. It's submitted to the league, and that's good enough. There are other leagues that have one or two years. So we put some flexibility in the bill to make sure that those individuals or leagues that are out there are moving forward.

But there were so many other leagues, like the lacrosse association, for which I've coached a couple of times. For those individuals, when you're getting your vulnerable persons check—and, quite frankly, those same individuals, the ones who are volunteering for hockey, would volunteer for soccer, would volunteer for lacrosse or baseball or any of the other sports that are out there. All you need to do is ask for a number of copies of the same check—there's no additional cost to it; and yes, there is a cost. But when you're dealing with these issues, we have got to look at the best interests of those ones we're trying to protect, and those are the kids in the province of Ontario.

There are so many aspects of what is happening. The big concern now is that there are fingerprinting requirements that are being brought forward by the RCMP. What is taking place there—in the time I have remaining—is that the RCMP has found that sex offenders were changing their name, so an individual who has the same birth date as a convicted sex offender is asked to submit a fingerprint to ensure that that's not a changed name. It's causing delays and problems within the entire process and in how to move forward. There is a cost that most of the leagues have been picking up.

In closing, I just want to say one thing. I look forward to the two-minute summary to comment on any concerns that may come forward. For these groups, organizations and individuals that are doing a great job: Keep up the great work there, and we are going to do the best that we can to protect you. But for those individuals or those organizations who have concerns: Are those the individuals you want in your organization, who will not have a background check?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Prior to my coming to this House, I was, for a period of some five years, a member of Toronto city council. One of my duties in that period was to serve as council's member on the child abuse foundation of Toronto. It was a group that I did not know at the time of my first appointment. I had some trepidation in going to such a group because I didn't know what to expect. But when I got there I found out really what a wonderful organization it was. It helped the victims of child abuse. It also sought to help those who committed the child abuse. It was a very good foundation, a very good charity, a very good group of men and women who worked very hard to try to heal families, to heal individuals who had found themselves the subject of child abuse or who had in fact committed it themselves.

They would often come forward with stories, as we sat around the table, of the work that had been done—the impossibility, sometimes, of dealing with certain individuals who were recidivists, who wanted to go back and do it again and again. They did have some success from time to time. But I think the hardest part of my five years' association with that foundation was the children themselves. The healing process was enormous. The children who never recovered—it was huge. The lives that were

wasted and squandered, I think, is the stuff that no one wants to think about but also that is all too rampant in our society.

Every day, when we open up a newspaper—not every day, perhaps, but often, when we open up a newspaper—we see stories of abuse, sometimes going back generations, of people who have been ashamed, even though they were the victims, and have not come forward for a week, a month, a year, a lifetime. By the time, often, that the perpetrator has been named and the police have done their investigation, the damage has been done not only to the individual who was violated but to sometimes 10 or 15 or 20 or more others who found themselves in the same circumstance, because all of this was hidden.

We know that individuals who have been found out many years after the fact will still deny it. We know, however, that a great many of them are starting to find themselves the subject of investigations, of criminal and judicial proceedings. We know that many of them who are or who were in positions of authority have been brought to task, put in jail, and their organizations forced to pay some enormous amounts of reparation.

When I served on Toronto city council, I remember, on one occasion, with tears streaming down almost everyone's eyes in the room, there was a young man who came forward, a very brave young man who had been part of the group of abused young people at Maple Leaf Gardens. That was something that people wanted to hush up, that national icon of the Canadian hockey league just a few blocks from here. No one wanted to talk about the young men who were abused; they didn't want to talk about it themselves. And I remember that young man particularly who came forward and who told his story. It was about a year after that that I read in the newspaper that, tragically, he had committed suicide because he couldn't live with what had happened anymore.

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So I think it is not too much, what the member from Oshawa is asking. He is asking that we protect those people. He is asking that people who are in positions of authority in organized sports have to submit necessary documentation to show that they are not likely to cause harm to vulnerable youth. He is asking only—and it's pretty simple here—that "the positions affected include the positions of referee, other official, trainer or coach. A person is not allowed to hold any of those positions without consenting to have a police force release a copy of his or her criminal record to the organizer."

It would seem to me that any organization should have that right, not just in sports. I understand the bill can't encompass everything, but I think it's a good start, and the member deserves some considerable credit for not being deterred. This is the third attempt to do so. Like so many bills in this Legislature, so many good bills that are private members' bills, they are passed, they are almost always unanimous if they are good ones, they are sent to committee, and they die. This ought not to die.

We were here last week in the Legislature, and there were two bills which received third reading and were sent for the Lieutenant Governor's signature. This is a bill that I think probably—I understand it might need to go to committee, but this is a bill that I would feel very comfortable about, personally, in saying that it should just get third reading. I doubt very much that there is anyone in this room who is going to stand up and speak against it. I doubt if there is anyone in this room, any of the members, who is going to say that this is somehow wrong or an infringement of rights. No one has the right to put themselves in proximity to children, vulnerable young people, if part of the intent is to abuse them.

So I want to thank the member for what he is doing. I want to thank him for his persistence. And I want to ask all members to find it in their hearts not just to speak to it today—because I'm sure everyone will say what they want to say about this—but to make sure, if this should be forced to go to committee, as it undoubtedly will, that it actually proceeds.

We have committees, many of them, that have very little work left to do in this session of Parliament. We are going to be in session until approximately the end of May or the first week of June, and we have many committees that could hear this bill, could look at amendments, could possibly even call a few witnesses, and could pass this into law. Certainly, the people of Ontario, the mothers and fathers, would welcome it, and the children who will be protected would owe this Legislature a lifetime of gratitude for not having to have a sexual predator or other in a position close to them that might cause them harm. The people of Ontario expect a bill like this to pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I deeply appreciate the opportunity to talk about Bill 86, and I commend and thank the member from Oshawa for his determination to bring this to light again. I know he knows that in private members' time, it's for us to decide, and that sometimes it takes a long time to get some bills passed. I was working on one and it took me five years.

But most importantly, I appreciate him for the topic that he's bringing to our attention. Nobody has a monopoly on what's being asked, and, quite frankly, I thank him for it, because I don't think there's a member in this place who doesn't want to say that one of their priorities, if not their top priority, is the safety and the health of our children.

I'm going to tell you this right off: I've been given a handful of notes on what government has done, and I want to say that I've done a check, and there isn't a government I've seen historically that has not talked about trying to do the best they can for children.

So I'm going to leave the notes aside and talk to him, thank him for his work in coaching and thank him for the work he has done on this particular topic. I know he actually had a lead role in some of the abuse discussions right inside of hockey, and I know he took that very seriously. He's seen and heard things that none of us want to hear. I appreciate his personal sacrifice in having to put up with some of that stuff.

Let me also say that I consider him more than a colleague, and I hope he does too; we've struck up a friendship. On this particular topic, I have to say that I agree with him, and I want to amplify his comment about the volume of volunteers we're not talking about. We want to make sure we hold up those volunteers who passionately work with children for the right reasons. I want to make sure I amplify that and say that this is not about them.

This is about those people—the insidious, sick, talented skills those predators have to infiltrate exactly where we know they go. It's like a kid in a candy shop, and I love the fact that we're going to start fighting them with fire with this legislation. What you're asking us to do, and I fully support, is to give enough people the tools to play the tricks on them. It's time for us to roll up our sleeves and get that done.

That's why I'm supporting the member's bill. I know I've spoken to him previously and said there are probably a few little glitches here and there that the legal guys need to take a look at. I hope it gets to committee. I, for one, believe it will get to committee automatically, and I do support the member from Beaches–East York, who asked us to push hard to get it further.

As an educator for 25 years and a principal for 12 or 13 years, I had to face some of those situations. I had to meet the parents, I had to deal with the children, and I had to work with the CAS and the destruction, the total annihilation this whole thing does, first to the child, then to the family and then to the community when they find this out.

We need to give the tools you're asking for to those people who are already doing a pretty good job. Those programs that are in existence now need to be amplified just as much as we need to take this bill.

I would say again: The government has done some things, and previous governments have done some things, that continue to focus a light on this. But don't forget: Not too long ago, this was not talked about; not too long ago, this was a hidden secret. Quite frankly, the public is saying, "Enough."

In that circumstance, I agree with the member. I agree with him because of his vast background and experience, but also for the stories he has shared with us about his constituents. His constituents have made it clear, as I've heard from other constituents, that these things are not acceptable.

I say again clearly: They're going to learn as fast as we try to make changes. That's another part of their skill set. We need to have a fluid motion in this. I would respectfully suggest—I did not hear the member say this, and I'm not attributing it to him—that this is not the be-all and end-all. This is a foundation for the continuation of battles that have gone on up to now, and I know he would accept the reality that we will continue to need to move in the direction to make sure that those individuals who are predators, because they have that sick skill set, will figure out ways to navigate one more time in a different direction.

I think it behooves all of us, not just as legislators but as parents, grandparents, people we coach for—in my background, I coached basketball for quite a few years when my kids were young, and bowling and a few other activities I was there for.

Today, one of the things I've learned more than I used to know from my own upbringing in the past is that parents are going to events more because they're afraid. They actually want to watch to make sure that things are okay for their kids. What an amazing concept. Would it surprise anybody that parents are scared? Would it surprise anybody to find out that we need to have rules like this? Quite frankly, it did happen historically. As I said, because it was a closed shop, and, "Oh, shh. We don't talk about things like that," we've allowed it to happen. Another reason why I'm supporting the bill is because it's one more item that shines the light on an issue that we cannot let take the back burner again.

I humbly ask all of us in this House to support this legislation, and I thank the member from Oshawa for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1400

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to support Bill 86, the Protection of Minors in Amateur Sports Act, which was introduced by my colleague the member from Oshawa. I want to thank him not only for presenting this bill, but I want to thank him for all the time he has spent in volunteering and working with minors in the hockey league. In particular, I've sat next to him a time or two as we were here in debate, and he was working out his program for that night's meeting with the sports teams.

I also want to thank him for his presentation talking about—and it's difficult to do that—things that happened to him when he was six years old, going all the way through, then talking about things that are happening to his children or his charges in the hockey league today. So I want to thank him for doing that.

The goal of this bill is to protect our children. I think that is something that every member of this Legislature would agree with. It would require coaches, referees, managers and officials to be subject to criminal background checks in order to participate in organized amateur sports with children under 18 years of age. I again want to commend the member for sticking with this issue.

This is the third time he has brought this bill forward. It was first introduced in April 2007, almost four years ago. After second reading, the bill was referred to committee. As we all know, once the bill is referred to committee, it has to be called for hearings, but it becomes a government bill at that point. So it gets into the process. The government has to decide to bring it to committee and then call it back for third reading. We all know that once it's referred there, they have to call it back.

In this case, it sat at the committee and, of course, it died with the 2007 election. The member from Oshawa, though, didn't give up. He reintroduced the bill in

December 2007. Again, it passed second reading unanimously. It died again when the government prorogued the Legislature. Now, for a third time, we are debating second reading of the same bill. I want to call on the government members to not only support this bill today but to encourage the government House leader to move it forward, give it committee hearings and bring it back here for third reading.

This situation seems very similar to the one I'm facing with my own private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act. My bill would save lives by making carbon monoxide detectors mandatory in Ontario. I introduced the bill in 2008. It passed second reading in April 2009. It too died in committee when the House prorogued. I introduced it again and it passed second reading debate, again unanimously. Four months later, there has been no movement on the bill.

It's sad that it fails to look beyond the process and that private members' bills languish in committee and die regardless of how good they are. How many families have been put at risk since 2008 because they don't have carbon monoxide detectors in their homes? How many children have been put at risk since 2007 because police checks haven't been required? I recognize that, thankfully, these situations are rare, but isn't putting one child at risk one too many?

Coaches are often volunteers who give back to the community to ensure their kids have an opportunity to play sports. Between games, practices and tournaments, I know that it can be a large commitment in time. It means early mornings at the rink and/or going to practices after a long day's work. I don't believe that people who are willing to give that much will object to the requirements that protect our children.

Coaching young people is one of the most sincere forms of volunteering. It takes time, passion and knowledge, and many hours of commitment. We need to protect our children by ensuring that people who are spending time with them and are in a position of authority are worthy of our trust.

It's not too much to ask that we ensure that they can pass a criminal background check. Almost every organization where volunteers will come into contact with people who are vulnerable provides for that level of protection. Ensuring that all children who play organized sports have that level of safety and protection is the right thing to do. I strongly support this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I congratulate my friend and my colleague for bringing forth this particular measure. I remember when he last proposed this measure, I supported it then and he'll have my vote today. So let's take that part off the table. We're not dealing with anything that's contentious. Let's get it done. Let's stay on the cases of our respective House leaders and let's get this one done. I would be pleased to stand up and applaud the member for having a private member's bill passed.

I agree with everything he has said, and I don't want to repeat a lot of it. I'd just like to add a little bit of perspective. My colleagues have done a lot of the passionate debate. I'm going to do some of the dispassionate definitions, so that in the event that in the future someone is reading this in Hansard or they're simply watching it today on television—let's define some of the things we're talking about.

There are two types of criminal records checks: the standard Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC, checks and the vulnerable sector checks, or the VSCs. So if you hear this language, if someone is talking to you, now you know what it means.

The standard CPIC check includes all convictions for which a pardon has not been granted; all charges, regardless of disposition; outstanding warrants and charges; and all judicial orders and other information that might be of interest in police investigations.

The vulnerable sector checks are used to protect vulnerable persons, and they include enhanced screening for individuals who work with people under 18 years of age, people with disabilities and people who work with those who have physical disabilities—for example, retirement home workers. It includes a scan of the pardoned sex offenders database which will detect all offenders who have received a conviction for a sex offence, regardless of whether they have been granted a pardon. And criminal records, finally to finish the definition part, are stored in criminal records information management services, which is a centralized database that's operated by the RCMP.

More to the point of what my colleague from Oshawa has been saying—we share a common passion. We're both hockey players. He's a pretty good player. I hope I do as well for him in goal. This is my 51st season in sports—in hockey in general. We've all acknowledged that what we're dealing with here are extremely rare circumstances. I know that in 51 years, I haven't—thank heavens—been exposed to anything such as what we've described. This is not to say that it doesn't happen, or to minimize the impact to those who do. But for perspective, we're dealing here in a very emotional debate with something whose instances are mercifully—and should remain—small and, hopefully, vanish.

To this end, among the things that Ontario has done: We now have 2,300 more police officers on Ontario streets, and in some small manner, this too will help keep the safety of our kids who are playing amateur sports. Ontario has established a first-of-its-kind $51-million guns and gangs strategy. In some small way, this too, in its way, will keep our kids who are playing amateur sports safe.

There have been a number of other such interventions but since 2003, as a reference point, there's been a decline in crime rates across the province, and some of that has to be attributed to measures to which all of us—because most of these measures have been supported by all three parties—have contributed. I think we can all take pleasure in the fact that the crime rate has declined 17% in the past seven years, including an 11% drop in violent crime.

Ontario has invested—and again with the support of all of our parties here—some $12.8 million in the provincial strategy to protect children from sexual exploitation on the Internet, off the Internet, in the arena or out of the arena. We're the first government to have a dedicated strategy such as this.

There are many other things that Ontario has done within and outside the realm of the law and this particular issue to protect children, including but not limited to such things as new immunizations for diseases, affordable new quality child care spaces, the Ontario child benefit and other things which, while salutary, do float outside the scope of this particular bill.

The term "amateur sports organizations" is very broadly defined so that I think in some respects one of the strengths of the bill is that it can encompass even informal sporting organizations. The member has done a lot of thinking about it and learned from each iteration as the bill has come before the House, so it's gotten a little bit better each and every time, and I thank him for that. In this respect, this bill is actually stronger for having come back a second and a third time, and I say to my colleague across: I think you've got it right now. Let's see if we can get this one through second and third reading and proclamation.

1410

As I said before, the member can count on my support on this particular bill. This is a bill that Ontario needs. This is the kind of bill that a lot of our families would look at and say to us, as members of their government, "You're doing your job. You're looking after us."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would like to speak today to Bill 86, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports. I would like to begin by commending the member for Oshawa for his perseverance. We've heard that this is the third time that he has introduced the bill. Unfortunately, each time, it has died on the order paper, but we've just heard from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville that he feels now the bill has been strengthened and he does see that it is important that we would pass it. Hopefully, we can pass it, not only second reading today, but third reading, and have it receive royal assent before the House rises at the end of this session.

I think we were all touched by the personal story that the member from Oshawa shared with us, and I do want to congratulate him for his commitment and his passion to protecting our young people, in particular our athletes. I think we all hear stories sometimes about trusted adults—they may be a family member, a coach, a teacher—who violate the trust of parents and the innocence of children, and certainly these stories are tragic and compelling.

As a parent, you often put your faith and your confidence in someone to coach, instruct, referee or teach your child, and in essence you're handing over the well-being and protection of your children to that person, so I think it is very important that we make sure that when we do that, our children are in safe hands. His personal story indicates that is not always the case, that someone in a position of responsibility breaks that sacred bond that should have been there between either the parent and the coach or the parent and the principal or the parent and the referee, and as a result, the trust is violated and confidence is shattered.

It's important that children and young athletes can look up to those who are their coaches and that they look at these people whom we know sometimes as role models. Sometimes they look at them as mother and father figures, and they can have a profound positive impact on the lives of these athletes, or conversely, they can cause severe emotional and psychological damage to a child.

For those reasons, I believe wholeheartedly that it's in the best interest of every family and child to make sure that we pass this bill today. We know that it is important that when we drop our children off at the rink, the gym or the field we can rest assured, knowing that our coaches and referees are there for the right reasons. We know that currently there is no provincial law mandating criminal background checks for coaches and volunteers, and we just need to make sure that we protect our children. That is what is most important.

I applaud the member for Oshawa for his passionate commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young athletes. Certainly, if we pass this bill today and in third reading and it receives royal assent, Ontario will become a safer and better place for our children and young athletes to learn to love a sport, to grow into mature adults who respect their opponents, play by the rules, and who eventually will donate their own time to future generations of aspiring athletes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. You've already heard the very capable submission of my NDP colleague the member for Beaches–East York and his indication that New Democrats are going to be supporting this bill. That's what I hear coming from across the way as well: that the government members are going to be supporting this bill. Well, so what, if the bill doesn't go any further than second reading.

We know—let's not kid ourselves—that, first of all, there are only eight weeks left, give or take a day or two, of this House even sitting. It's scheduled to rise on June 2, and of course, an election on October 6 means it's not coming back in September. In fact, the government may scurry out of here before June 2. One of the windows of opportunity, if they're going to go scurrying, is after the last week of April and the Easter break.

Here we've got a very important proposition, one that addresses the welfare of a big chunk of young people here in the province of Ontario, and one that can be very readily implemented. The bill has got to go to committee. We've got to hear from groups who will be impacted. We've got to hear from those policing agencies that will

be called upon to do the fingerprinting—although I'm told, as well, that there's now some private sector fingerprinting that's being done.

One of the problems, of course, as we learned just recently, is that there are huge backlogs in a whole lot of jurisdictions when it comes to criminal record checks through the local police services. That means that volunteers who are submitting to the criminal record checks and providing their fingerprints so that their criminal records can be confirmed are waiting not just weeks but months to be cleared. This will aggravate that problem unless that problem is indeed addressed, and there has been nothing coming from the government to suggest that it ought to be addressed.

If I had my druthers, I'd rather see a bill that encompassed more than just amateur sports, but the fact is that the bill is very focused on amateur sports, and the author of the bill, its sponsor, is to be commended for that, because the bill—the structure, the regime that it proposes—could become a model for all other youth activities that utilize adult supervision, whether it's Scouting or Girl Guides or the cadet movement, or local community recreation centres, for that matter.

The bill has got to go to committee, and it's only going to be dealt with in committee if the government agrees to do it, and quite frankly, at this point, that means if the Premier's office agrees to do it. It's not about the government House leader; hell's bells, I wish it were. It's about the Premier's office. The Premier is either going to give this a green light or a red light. If it gets a red light, it's going to be sent off into legislative orbit; it's going to go to that black hole where so many good private members' bills end up around here and never be seen again. But the bill is too important, the proposition is too legitimate, the evil that it addresses is too evil for this bill to be forced into that black hole of dying bills that the Premier's office so quickly diverts bills to.

Let's see how much clout government backbenchers have with their Premier's office. One can only try; one can only hope. I know there are people here on these government benches who are prepared to take on the Premier, who are prepared to confront him, poke him in the chest with their forefinger, if need be, and tell him to his face that if this bill doesn't get dealt with in committee, then they will publicly condemn their Premier, Mr. McGuinty; that they'll go to the Star or the Sun or the Globe or the Post and talk about a Premier whose intransigence is putting kids at risk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to first commend the member from Oshawa, as all members have here today. It is very obvious that unanimous support is forthcoming.

I think it's important to reflect on where the member from Oshawa came from. His riding is next door to mine, and we often travel together or share events and talk about things. He is passionate about this. He has two young boys whom he's very proud of, and he's very engaged in their life. I've worked with him and learned a lot from him. He sponsored a kids' fishing day, supporting children who may not otherwise get to do outdoor events. He's well known for his advocacy in minor hockey and lacrosse and other activities. So he knows of what he speaks and he's passionate about it.

1420

Last night, I happened to be watching my favourite show, The Agenda, on TVOntario.

Laughter.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it is my favourite show, and right after the show there was an excellent program. It was a documentary called Chosen. This was a fundamentally important documentary about abuse in English private residential schools. It was the testimonial of three people, young boys at the time, whose lives were permanently altered.

So the implications of this—protecting youth from molestation of any sort, or predators, as I would call them—are absolutely critical. Much has been discussed here. In fact, this past week, we passed a bill here in the House—at least, it went to committee—Bill 163, the sex offender registry, called Christopher's Law.

I spoke on that bill and I did some research; I talked about sex offenders. I'm talking about rapists and child molesters, pedophiles. The recidivism rate is quite astonishing; that is, the rate of repeating the offence. It's proven that they're non-rehabilitative. As such, some of these people, as the member from Oshawa said, applied for a pardon, because convicted sex offenders can apply for a pardon. When they get a pardon, they can go to the Ministry of Government Services, get a name change and then they can relocate somewhere in Canada or other places and continue their abuse of young children.

In summary, it's important to know that repeat perpetrations on children ruin their childhood and ruin their lives permanently. My siding on this thing is for the victims. I wouldn't give them the light of day, if the perpetrator was convicted. There would be no pardon; there would be no name change; and they should be completely under surveillance for the rest of their lives, because they have ruined someone else's life.

I think the minister, or the member—and former minister, I might say—raises a very strong point, and I would urge Premier McGuinty, in his last few hours and days as Premier, to let this go to committee. Let's consult with the coaches and the other recreation people and broaden it. In fact, he could attach it to Bill 163, which is the sex offender registry. This bill could be amended to be attached to Bill 163, which is going to committee.

I would urge the members here on the government side, the Liberal members themselves here today, to say, as the member from Brant said, that they can vote with their conscience for private members' business. I would urge them to vote with their conscience on this and vote for it to go to committee.

I look forward to the vote on this bill, because the member from Oshawa is doing the right thing for the right reasons. We all support it, and I thank him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the comments from the members from Beaches–East York, Brant, Oxford, Mississauga–Streetsville, Kitchener–Waterloo, Welland and Durham.

In the time that I have remaining, I want to answer a few questions. There are some concerns coming forward about such things as the background checks. The intention, when I dealt with the Legislative Assembly, was to ensure that vulnerable persons checks were one of the key components of it.

Not only that, but sports are predominantly determined by Sport Ontario. That's an organization that regulates all of the amateur sports in the province of Ontario. I recall, during the discussions—the way it's originally worded, kids playing road hockey might have to be subject to it. No. The intention's not there at all, in any case. The intention is those organized sports that are disciplined through Sport Ontario as the governing body.

The object and the police component—there are now organizations out there providing services, as the member from Welland mentioned. I know former Deputy Chief Rod Piukkala, from the region of Durham—he was with Peel prior to Durham—is now working with an organization, and guess what? He's one of three organizations that provide background checks as a business and, quite frankly, at a substantially reduced cost. I know instead of paying $20 or $30, I think it was offered at about $12 for a check, and, yes, they come up with that.

Another aspect is the concern regarding the time frames it takes. The leagues are complying with individuals by giving them an allowance in there, but we have to start somewhere. We have to allow this. Individuals could, as I stated earlier, request multiple copies of the bill in order to reduce costs at that time.

We have to start somewhere, and we as legislators in the province of Ontario need to look forward. Is it the right thing to do? I think it is. I think we have to do whatever we can to protect the kids in the province of Ontario, and this is a great place to start.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for debate on this ballot item has now expired. For those in the galleries and those watching at home, we'll vote on Mr. Ouellette's item in about 100 minutes.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

Mme Gélinas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 45, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

M^me^ France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise today to debate second reading of Bill 45 in the hope that the members of this chamber will agree to pass it on second reading so that it can go to debate in front of committee.

Bill 45 would ban the use of temporary replacement workers during a labour dispute. I want to thank a whole lot of people, starting with Sid Ryan from the OFL for organizing the rally; Wayne Fraser, Ontario director of the United Steelworkers, for their activists; and thanks to all of the MPPs who accepted the invitation of the activists to discuss the issue.

I want to thank Selina Clement Mikkola, president of OCARE, the Ontario Coalition Against Replacement Employees; Joann Marshall, vice-president; Peter Desilets; Nathan Aubin; Wyman MacKinnon; John Closs; and all of the members of OCARE.

I want to thank Smokey Thomas from OPSEU for the use of their website and the contribution toward the cost of the buses; CUPE for all of their support; the Sudbury labour council; the Power Workers' Union; the Ontario Professional Society of Engineers; the CAW—more specifically, Mine Mill Local 598; Bryan Neath and Don Morin from UFCW; RWDSU; SEIU; Laurentian University labour studies; Madame Louisette Roy of Hearst; Madame Denise Oban of Hanmer; OSSTF; l'AEFO; ONA; the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers; the Asbestos Workers—the list goes on.

This is to show you the support we have throughout Ontario towards banning replacement workers.

I, like all of those people, strongly believe that Bill 45 is a vitally important issue for people across our province. My portfolio is health, so many people ask me, "Why a labour bill?" Well, the answer is simple. I believe in healthy communities, and Bill 45 will help us create and sustain healthy communities in Ontario.

In 2009, while the Vale strike was going on, my office was flooded, first by young families who couldn't pay their bills. Then more mature workers started to come in and then replacement workers started to come in. They were all seeking help. They were all having a really tough time. In the back of my mind, all alarms were going off. Desperate people do desperate things. What was going on? We've had strikes in Sudbury before. The difference was that they were using temporary replacement workers. There were divisions on the picket line for sure, but those divisive forces were also at play in families, in neighbourhoods and in my entire community.

So I decided to apply what I call a "determinants of health" lens to this issue: Let's see what's behind this. OCARE was formed, the Ontario Coalition Against Replacement Employees, and they have been meeting for the last year and a half. We all know that 97% to 99% of collective agreements are negotiated successfully at the bargaining table; only a small percentage go into labour disputes. Although this percentage is small, they involve thousands of workers each and every year in this province. Human Resources Canada says that in 2009 the average annual hour loss per employee due to strikes and

lockouts in Ontario was twice the average recorded in other provinces, such as British Columbia and Quebec.

I want to give the example of Engineered Coated Products in Brantford, where workers have been walking the picket line for over two and a half years. Since August 23, 2008, those people have been on the picket line while replacement workers go in and do their work.

1430

The same company has a plant in British Columbia. In British Columbia, they settled the contract. Why such a difference? Because British Columbia has a ban on replacement workers and Ontario doesn't.

I want to talk about MultiServ in Nanticoke. Since July 10, 2009, they have been walking the picket line, and temporary replacement workers are doing their work. Infinity Rubber in Toronto: Since December 1, 2009, they have been walking the picket line, and temporary replacement workers are doing their work. And the list goes on and on.

You should have seen it: At the rally today, there was worker after worker, talking about their strike, their lockout and how temporary replacement workers were doing their work.

Over the last several months, OCARE spent a ton of time reading academic papers on the effects of anti-replacement workers' laws. Let me tell you, economists are prolific. We read from Paul Duffy and Susan Johnson from Wilfrid Laurier; we looked at John Budd and Yijiang Wang from the University of Minnesota; Peter Cramton from the University of Maryland; Morley Gunderson from the University of Toronto; Joseph Tracy from the Federal Reserve Bank; Benjamin Dachis and Robert Hebdon from the C.D. Howe Institute; Mr. Singh, Ms. Zinni and Mr. Jain from West Virginia University; Larry Savage and Jonah Butovsky from Brock University, St. Catharines; Robert Michael Smith from Ohio; and J.A. Frank and Michael Kelly from the University of Ottawa.

I also read all the economists who write in French: Luc Martineau, Marcel Boyer, Marie-Ange Moreau, Gilles Trudeau, Geneviève Bonin, Denis Harrisson, Pierre Verge and Luc Vaillancourt. That goes from McGill University, l'Université Laval, l'Université de Montreal and l'Institut économique de Montréal. They are all interested in talking about the economic impact of using temporary replacement workers.

Let me tell you something about economists: They can't agree in an empty room. One of them would say that temporary replacement workers make strikes longer; the other one would argue that it makes them shorter. One says it increases the frequency of strikes; the other one argues that it decreases the frequency. One says it increases the rate of investment; some say it decreases it and some say it has no effect at all. Some say that it pushes the balance toward workers; others say it doesn't.

Although those people apparently like to argue with one another, they all agree on one thing: Temporary replacement workers have a social impact on the community where they're used. The impact is real, and studies are needed.

We started to look at that also. We went to the Ministry of Labour to see how frequent replacement workers are. You'll be interested to know that our Minister of Labour does not keep track of this issue, so we had to do the work ourselves. We contacted 434 unions and found out in how many strikes and lockouts temporary replacement workers had been used.

We discovered that the use of temporary replacement workers is growing rapidly. An entire industry has flourished in Ontario, starting with security companies who will turn your plant into Fort Knox, with video cameras and all the rest, and all of the temp agencies who see a strike and a lockout as a gold mine because they can charge four times what the worker is worth for them to cross the picket line. We have HR agencies biting at the bit for a strike or a lockout to happen so that they can sell and peddle their temporary replacement workers, who are plentiful in a time of recession when 250,000 people have lost their jobs.

What's the flip side of this sad state of affairs? It has a horrific impact on the social fabric of our communities throughout Ontario. Temporary replacement workers are divisive, and I will explain to you what that does to the quality of our social environment and to the real quality of life of all of us in Ontario, whether you have been touched by a labour conflict or not.

Temporary replacement workers have a major impact on the psychological and social well-being of modern populations. Their effect is strong because they affect our social structure. They affect where we live. We are all human beings. We are vulnerable to the deterioration of our social well-being as well as the quality of our social relations and the relations of those around us.

The most important sources of stress are in society at large; they affect us most powerfully.

The use of temporary replacement workers affects people's pride, dignity and self-confidence. Ask any one of those workers in the gallery; they'll all tell you the same thing.

My background is not in labour, but I know how to measure the health of a community. When you want to see a healthy community, you look at social inclusion and cohesion; you look at the level of involvement in community life, social connectedness and civic engagement. This tells you if you have healthy people, healthy families and healthy communities.

The use of replacement workers weakens community life, reduces trust and deteriorates the quality of the social relations. It affects our ability to identify with one another. It is a loss to civil society; it is a loss of empathy for one another. It decreases the quality of life for all involved. The stress a temporary replacement worker brings into a community wears us down. It wears us out.

For those of you who are still listening now, I want you to remember five things. First, strikes and lockouts are rare, but they still affect thousands of Ontarians every year.

The use of temporary replacement workers in Ontario is on the rise. It's happening more often than you think—just check our Facebook site, if you are interested to know more—and the Ministry of Labour does not keep track.

An entire industry has developed in Ontario that encourages and supports the use of temporary replacement workers in this province, to the detriment of all of us.

The economic impacts? They're arguable, but they remain small. There's not that much of them.

The social impacts are real, they are powerful and they are long-lasting.

Les grèves et les lock-out sont rares en Ontario. On dit que 99 % des conventions collectives sont négociées sans arrêt de travail. Mais il y a quand même des milliers de travailleurs et travailleuses qui sont touchés chaque année.

L'utilisation de travailleurs de remplacement augmente dans notre province, bien que le ministre de Travail ne garde pas de statistiques à ce sujet. Il y a toute une industrie qui s'est développée qui encourage et qui soutient l'utilisation de travailleurs de remplacement. On parle ici des compagnies de sécurité et des agences de travailleurs temporaires.

Les impacts économiques des travailleurs de remplacement ont été étudiés ad nauseam par des douzaines d'économistes. Tout ce que je peux vous dire, c'est qu'il n'y a pas de consensus sur les effets économiques, mais il y a beaucoup d'arguments. Par contre, le déchirement du tissu social des communautés et les impacts sociaux sont puissants et sont ressentis longtemps dans les communautés affectées.

Pour toutes ces raisons, je demande aux membres de cette Assemblée législative d'appuyer mon projet de loi.

For all of the reasons I listed before, I would ask that members of this House support Bill 45 and vote in favour of my bill.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Stop the clock. I would just like to say to the members in the public gallery that you're certainly welcome to be at Queen's Park today and we're happy that you're here, but we do have a very strict rule that you cannot participate in the debate, and that includes clapping. I would ask you to respect that.

Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is a pleasure to speak to the bill of the member from Nickel Belt, a proposal advanced by a well-meaning and hard-working member. C'est toujours un plaisir d'écouter la députée en anglais ou en français.

The proposal before the House has some strong advocates. I'd like to look at what issues this proposal does and doesn't address. I'd also like to discuss it in light of some of the 21st-century issues that define not merely labour and management but also prosperity and opportunity.

When a collective agreement has expired, a legal strike or a lockout has to meet some stringent preconditions. The union and the employer must first bargain in good faith. The bargaining unit must hold a vote and receive a mandate to strike from a majority of employees in the bargaining unit. Notice of a strike or lockout has to be given to the other party and to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. If a mediator has been appointed, the mediation process must have ended and 48 hours must have passed. A strike or a lockout that does not meet these conditions constitutes a breach of the code.

During a strike, a worker can choose to work elsewhere. The proposal before this House suggests that an employer may not hire replacement workers during a strike or a lockout. Striking employees may earn temporary or full-time income elsewhere or even leave the employment of the employer, while the employer doesn't have the freedom to hire another worker unless and until the strike or the lockout has been resolved.

So might this proposal tilt the table during a labour dispute in favour of a union? I think this is a question that members need to address. This may not be what the member intended, but it may well be the outcome.

1440

One may wish to consider that fewer and fewer Ontarians are choosing a collective bargaining relationship with their employer each year. Yet, unions remain a vital check and balance because, as my own professor who taught us labour relations when I did my post-grad once said, and I remember his exact words, "The motives of management are not benign."

Relevance in rapidly changing times is a strong challenge to today's labour movement, and unions are facing the need to change as our world, our workforce and our business environment changes. And let's face it: It's not the bargaining unit versus the organization's management. Indeed, if one sees labour relations through this very narrow lens, it's like saying that one party plans to sink the other party's half of the only boat they will both occupy amid a storm on rough seas.

The opportunity and the available wealth to share in the upcoming years are just staggering. Firms of all sizes not only can but must see the whole world not merely as their market but as part of their supply chain, part of their source of start-up funds and part of their source of labour.

To what degree does this proposal make Ontario firms and Ontario workforces globally competitive? This is something that I, as a member, need to consider before I place my vote. We need unions to be relevant in a time when people work on a contract basis or a temporary basis. These can be vulnerable workers, but their needs and circumstances are diverse, and more flexibility than our traditional collective bargaining agreements cover is needed.

Work itself is becoming transnational in nature. It's not only possible but fairly common for such knowledge-based work as design, engineering, architecture and computer software to go on around the clock, with workers checking in and checking out of their shifts in different time zones and in different countries. The work itself is stored on servers situated who knows where?

The measure before this House doesn't show us how these knowledge-based workers might benefit. The measure before this House talks about compensation in terms of something stated specifically in the collective bargaining agreement. I think we're concerned here that today the Legislature is asked to deal with a proposed measure that affects very few collective agreements, by the member's own admission, in even fewer exceptional circumstances.

We can point to individual acts by either management or bargaining units in which one or both parties lost sight of the interests of the people employed by the organization or the customers, the users, the clients or even the suppliers—by what they can do together.

One may ask whether these specific instances should put Ontario out of step with other legislative jurisdictions in North America. Among the 10 Canadian provinces and 50 US states, only Quebec and British Columbia have enacted measures such as the member proposes. Earlier, I pointed out that the proposal may tilt the tables and increase the power of one party at the expense of the other. While I am sure this is not intended, we don't have any indication as to whether this may be the outcome.

We have discussed some of the many challenges facing the labour movement, so let's talk about a few more. Will this measure help the labour movement in the services sector? Will it help employees classified as supervisory, technical, professional or managerial? How do we address the issues of how people who are either directed or enticed to work from home are treated?

Young entrants to the job market have more choices than ever before. They're better educated than they ever have been, and they can and do go with the opportunity rather than the company or the bargaining unit. So is this proposal relevant to young people in today's changing times?

The statistics such as they are, which the member freely admitted are inconclusive, suggest that maybe replacement workers do or don't increase the length of strikes; maybe they do or don't increase the incidence of strikes. But I think a little bit more clarity might be helpful before we make a choice such as the member has asked us to make.

There are fairly few complaints submitted to the Canada industrial labour board, and those under consideration at any given time can be counted on the fingers of one hand, usually with enough fingers left over to pick up a bowling ball. So the question before the House might well be: Do we have a solution in search of a problem, or is the focus going forward to a labour movement that we need today more than ever before? Is it on the future in the 21st century instead of on the issues of the 20th century? Those are the things that I'll be thinking of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to acknowledge, and respectfully so, the member from Nickel Belt, who I believe is probably one of the most passionate people here on some issues. I have great respect for her and her commitment, for sure. On her critic file she's quite well respected. I see this as an important statement about wanting to find solutions in the workplace, often when there are competing interests.

I always start things from where I'm from. I basically worked for General Motors for 30 years—30 or a bit more than that—and had the opportunity to work in the personnel area for some time, not just in an office environment but in a factory environment with perhaps 500 people in the group. It's always good to have harmony. I used to think that it was important for me to have worked very closely with the district committee person or one of the union heads to head off a rebellion. If there's a problem in the group and if you don't deal with it, your best partner to deal with it is the person who is duly elected by the membership. I actually know Sid Ryan very well. In fact, when I studied, I can say I had great time to spend at the University of Toronto. I studied under John Crispo, who is a highly regarded labour economist from the University of Toronto—he has since retired—and I've often spoken with Morley Gunderson and some of the people you have mentioned.

I think almost every member here, without exception, would strive to see that we have harmony in this place—often we don't, but harmony in the workplace. Even if I draw it to my own riding of Durham, this past March to, basically, July there was a situation where there was a strike at St. Marys Cement. I did visit the workers on the picket line and was quite respectful. I actually knew quite a few of them, really. It was a very important issue, a significant issue.

The company at one time was a family-owned business, St. Marys Cement. Since that time, the rules around cement and cement manufacturing—cement has become a very political issue because of the carbon. Carbon dioxide is the main emission when you melt limestone, and the chemistry is that it's carbon dioxide that goes out the smokestack. That's part of the chemistry. It's not anything to do with the fuel they use to melt the limestone.

The company, I think, saw the writing on the wall, so St. Marys was actually bought over by a Brazilian company. The Brazilian company of course uses the facility at its leisure and tried to change the rules. They changed the rules by saying they were going to eliminate the pension. As we all know, whether it's Nortel, General Motors, Inco or Stelco, pensions are a huge issue, a big-time issue. The rules have all changed around pensions, big time. That issue is one of the more contentious issues. The union leadership played a very important part in actually getting the people back to work.

The point I'm making is—it's like steel, as Paul Miller would know; they don't like to shut down the furnaces in those strikes because there's a chance of damage etc. to equipment. So you get into these situations that sometimes management is there. Sometimes they're not skilled enough to do these things—having been in that position myself, perhaps. But they did use replacement workers, which caused, as France has said, another level of tension.

The research—and I have quite a bit of research on the issue—does shift the playing field. I have a report here by Paul Duffy and Susan Johnson, and it's from Canadian Public Policy, 2009. It's fairly relevant, fairly recent, and it does show that it does tip the scales considerably.

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"The results indicate that anti-scab legislation increases the number of work stoppages"—it's anti-scab legislation; that's no replacement workers—and decreases the length of strikes. "Both these results are statistically significant at the 99% level and substantial in magnitude."

"Opponents" of this, "often from the business community, argue that such legislation limits the right of the employer to continue to try to operate during a work stoppage, gives the union an unfair advantage at the bargaining table, reduces employment and investment," and is detrimental in the long run to the company's survival in Canada.

We see the erosion of the manufacturing environment at a considerable rate. In fact, I'm in the midst of reading a report about the loss of manufacturing in the United States. There is a website you should look at; it's devastating. What are those families and people going to do?

I believe we should be working co-operatively. When I studied at U of T in labour economics, I had the privilege of taking part in some of this investigation into options—and there are options; there's not just one way.

For instance, the position of the power workers is a good example on the closure of coal plants: very important. They recognize that they're at the table. They recognize that those jobs could be lost. Their voice is important. It's not always confrontation between management and union; these are economic fundamentals of the future.

I also look at the relationship at Bruce Power in the Bruce Peninsula. The nuclear plant was ready to be mothballed, the whole frigging plant, technically. The power workers and the teachers' union all got together, basically, and it ended up being a shared relationship. There's still a union, there are still workplace issues, and there's a new relationship—let's put it that way.

I would say that back then there were lots of debates at the federal level on what they called tripartism, where there is a rightful role of government at the table, not just the Minister of Labour saying, "We can't interfere. We like negotiated solutions. We can't do anything. Here's the arbitrator"—whatever. It's standard blockage, standard red tape. Progressively, they should be at the table. It's about the economy. It's about the lives of families and the future for young people. We can't give our economy away to China. We all can't be doctors and lawyers and all these fancy things; we need practical resolve for families to earn a respectable living.

At the table should be government, labour and management, whether it's the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters or some leadership group like the group of John Manley, former finance minister. That's the future. Any other resolution is nothing more than continued confrontation.

As I said, some of the leadership in the union movement today are—well, not some; all. People like Ken Lewenza are very capable, well-educated people. I remember sitting at the side table one time in negotiations. The economist for the CAW—what the heck was his name? Sam Gindin. This guy had a Ph.D. in economics. He was smarter than the guy on the other side. He happened to have a little different ideology, but he knew the numbers of what the hours per job meant in terms of job losses.

There are three natural parties, as I said. The government has a role: "It's about the economy, stupid." The union leadership has a role: It's about the future of workers and workers' rights; we're not going to end up working like China. The third member is, of course, the investors, the capitalists.

I always say during all this debate about the union problems and the pension problems that there's one important thing: There is no Mr. General Motors. General Motors is owned by shareholders. Now, who are these shareholders? Let's look at them. Who are they? They're the pension funds. To think that "profit" is a bad word? Why are the pensions in the ditch? Because there's no return on equity; there are no dividends. Everybody's going over the cliff.

Everybody should be at the table here. Let's forget the confrontation: "There's only one solution here," blah, blah, blah. I get the bill. I understand your compassion. This is a very sophisticated, very complex issue. I don't hear much from the other side except, "We're going to vote against it."

One last thing—I want to make a point. There's a lot of building of relationships that I want to make very clear here. During the election in October, there are a very important series of advertisements paid for by Working Families. Who are the Working Families? Those advertisements—millions and millions of dollars—are paid for by union dues. And what is the point of those union dues? To re-elect Premier McGuinty. That's the entire purpose of the Working Families.

You're all union leaders. You know what the game is, that the Tories are bad—look, I don't think I've ever heard a perfect solution to any question in this House: not by the Liberals, not by the NDP and not by the Conservatives. I'll tell you right now, there aren't any simple solutions; we'd already be in paradise.

So if you think that this vote today is going to resolve the issues, check out the Working Families and where their money is going: for the advertisements in the next election.

Who is the government that last week eliminated the right to strike for the transit workers? The McGuinty government. This —

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: Regarding standing order 23(b)(i) and (ii), the member opposite has directed his remarks to something other than the question under discussion or a motion or amendment other than that which is on the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I certainly don't find anything out of order.

The honourable member for Durham has the floor.

Mr. John O'Toole: The bill last week that took away the right to strike for the Toronto transit workers was just the edge of the wedge. Check out the vote on Bill 150, and you'll see exactly what balance and what rights and representations are related.

This act has provisions that I find don't give enough flexibility, but I think it has the right—and it's going to be up to the Liberal government. They have the majority, and it's going to be up to them whether or not this has life breathed into it. What I'm really here for is to see just how they represent their constituents and how they vote today.

This guy right over here who just spoke, to give you an example, reads some prepared—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm very, very pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill 45. No bones about it, I'm very proud to speak in favour of this bill to ban the use of replacement workers, a.k.a. scabs, during strikes.

First of all, I want to applaud my colleague Madame Gélinas, the member for Nickel Belt, for bringing forward this bill. I know that she has also presented thousands upon thousands of petitions in support of the bill over the past couple of weeks and months in this House.

I also want to thank the labour leaders from across the province who have worked together to launch the province-wide campaign to support this bill. Many of them are here today in the chamber, and many of the workers who work in plants and factories and workplaces around this province are here as well. Solidarity, everyone. Thank you for being here. I very much appreciate it.

The member for Nickel Belt, of course, knows full well the damage caused when scabs are being used by companies that decide that during a strike, they want to replace the workers who are on the picket line. As she said, she comes from Sudbury, a community torn apart last year during a lengthy strike at Vale Inco. That company used scabs to try to divide and conquer the community, divide and conquer the workers. It was a horrible, horrible situation.

When men and women who have worked hard, who have sacrificed a great deal, who have played by the rules decide—and I put to you, it is never an easy decision—to withdraw their labour in an effort to gain better wages, benefits, working conditions—well, imagine what it's like when men and women walk the picket line each and every day and they have to watch as neighbours, maybe even friends, sometimes relatives, are seduced into crossing a picket line. That's what the member from Nickel Belt was talking about in her remarks introducing this bill. It is destructive, it is poisonous, and it does nothing at all to smoothly resolve labour disputes in the province of Ontario. In fact, it does the absolute opposite: It leads to longer strikes and it leads to animosity. And yes, unfortunately, from time to time, it can even lead to violence. We've seen that here in Ontario all too many times.

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This isn't the first time that New Democrats have brought forward a bill to ban the use of scabs. When we were the government, in fact, that was the law of the land. Bob Mackenzie, a great former member of this place who passed away recently, and who served as Ontario's first minister for labour, brought that law into place. Unfortunately, it was quickly undone by the Conservative government under Mr. Harris. And for the past 15 years, New Democrats have regularly tried to bring the law back because it is the fair and the right thing to do.

Make no mistake, though: This government has had almost eight years to reverse the Conservative government's decision. Eight long years this government has been in place, and they could have, at any time, brought back anti-scab legislation in this province, but they refused.

Now, I could talk a lot about that, but I hear we actually might have some progress today, that there might actually be some members who sit on the government benches who are prepared to support this bill this time around. I'm pleased to hear that. I'm pleased to hear that that's a possibility. Because if the bill does pass today, I urge the government to stop playing games and to get serious about anti-scab legislation in this province. If we can get it passed today, we know what happens next. The bill has to go to committee, and it has to go to committee quickly. It has to go to committee, go through the process and get back in this Legislature for a speedy third reading.

Now, we all know, and we've seen it very recently, that the government can do that when they're interested in getting a bill passed and when they're interested in changing the lay of the land in the province of Ontario. I'm not going to go into details, but we all know, sitting here, the most recent example of that.

Getting the bill back for third reading and then getting it through royal assent so that it can become the law before the next election is the obligation of the governing party. We've done our jobs here in this Legislature: the members here who are going to vote on this bill, the people in the galleries, and the labour leaders who have worked hard to raise this issue again and bring it forward, to come here with their voice and their strength saying that they want this as the law of the land. Everybody has done their job. Now it's up to the Liberal government on the other side.

Please do not insult these workers, these labour leaders. Vote for this bill, yes, and I applaud those who will, but do more than just that: Commit to passing it into law at the earliest opportunity. Ontario's working women and men will be watching. If it doesn't become law, everyone will know that it's the McGuinty Liberals who are responsible for that failure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to speak to Bill 45. First, as others have, I want to acknowledge the member from Nickel Belt in bringing Bill 45 forward.

I want to say that traditionally in private members' time often it's matters of interest to a member, but not necessarily on broad government policy. But I also respect the fact that the third party, in particular, has this as a particular window of opportunity to bring forward policy measures that they wouldn't be able to get in front of this House at another time. That's why I respect and engage in the debate in that fashion.

I think the last time I spoke to this matter was on Bill 86 from the member from Welland. The words may not have been quite the same, but the fundamental principles certainly remain intact throughout it. At that point, I was not intending to be inflammatory, but it seemed that at that time my comments did inflame to some extent the gallery, and if that occurs again, I want to apologize to the Speaker up front and give him sort of a heads-up if he has to ask for order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You're going to make the same mistake again; is that what you're saying?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm eternally hopeful that that won't be the case, but just in the event that it is.

I want to say just a few things in the time available. This Parliament, this Legislature, has a long history, and during that history, there was only a roughly three- to four-year period, 1992 to 1995, in which legislation that is being proposed was in place. All of the time before that—with successive governments, at the very least of two stripes and not including anything that might have been a coalition of sorts of the day, a partnership—and subsequent to that, the majority parties of two different colours, the Conservatives and the Liberals, had either not seen fit to introduce that kind of legislation prior to 1982, nor subsequently once the Mike Harris government of the day, in 1995—and members across the way were there and were a part of that decision-making. They didn't see fit in their eight years to reintroduce that legislation.

Our government, in its time, has not introduced legislation to ban replacement workers. I wouldn't expect, in my view, that the government will anticipate introducing legislation to restrict replacement workers during the balance of this mandate, and I certainly wouldn't even want to anticipate anything beyond that. I think it's fair to say that one wouldn't expect that to occur.

Most of the speakers have referenced the successes that have occurred in labour relations. In my belief, that's a principal part of what we've managed to achieve collaboratively over a long period of time. But for more recent times, the level of success that both employers and employees have had in finding a means to negotiate settlements—when we speak to the area of 97% of negotiations getting settled without a strike or lockout, I think that speaks extremely well to the labour relations in this province. Presumably, of the remainder, the other 3%, although there are always hardships—there are hardships to strikers, their families, to some extent the employer, their customers and their supply chain, but most dramatically it would affect the workers and their families. Having said that, it's not my understanding that each of those strikes, of that 3%, resulted in replacement workers being brought on site. So I'm not even sure what those numbers would be. But those strikes found ways to find negotiated settlements after the fact.

In the country, my understanding is that there are two provinces, BC and Quebec, that have legislation of this type, and there are eight provinces, including Ontario, that have chosen not to go that particular route. Whether that is right or wrong on numbers, the reality is that the vast majority of the provinces have chosen not to have legislation of this type and a minority, at this point, have.

The members opposite referenced the fact that there have been a number of times that this ban on replacement workers, legislation or something very similar, has been brought forward, and I think there are probably eight or nine times in the past number of years in which legislation, through private members' bills, has been brought forward for consideration by this Parliament. As I said when I opened up, I think that's an opportunity, and the right opportunity for the third party in particular, to be able to use this forum, private members' hour, to bring forward policy initiatives that are important to them and that they wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to bring forward.

I, too, want to thank the stakeholders who are here, the labour groups that are here, for taking the time to come in support of the member, in support of the legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to join in this debate. The NDP caucus all wanted to participate. Of course, we're allowed a scant 12 minutes on private members' public business.

I've always respected the insight that the writer Jack London—he died in 1916, but I've always respected the insight that he provided to this whole issue of just what it is to be a scab. He wrote a very short commentary called "The Scab." Let me share it with you.

"After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made a scab.

"A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue.

"Where others have hearts, he carries a tumour of rotten principles.

"When a scab comes down the street, men turn their backs and angels weep in heaven, and the devil shuts the gates of hell to keep him out.

"No man (or woman) has a right to scab so long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass in, or a rope long enough to hang his body with.

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"Judas was a gentleman compared with a scab. For betraying his master, he had character enough to hang himself. A scab has not.

"Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.

"Judas sold his Saviour for 30 pieces of silver.

"Benedict Arnold sold his country for a promise of a commission in the British Army.

"The scab sells his birthright, country, his wife, his children and his fellowmen for an unfulfilled promise from his employer.

"Esau was a traitor to himself; Judas was a traitor to his God; Benedict Arnold was a traitor to his country.

"A scab is a traitor to his God, his country, his family and his class."

Down where I come from in Welland, just like up in Sudbury, or in Windsor, Hamilton or Toronto, you're either with working women and men or you're against them. And this bill, Bill 45, is all about standing shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, hand in hand with working women and men.

As a New Democrat, I'm proud to see this bill before this chamber. I'm proud to participate in its second reading. I'm proud of the working women and men across this province, across this country who struggled over the course of generations and decades and often paid with their blood, lives and liberty to advance the rights and interests of working people in North America and the world. I'm proud of you and I know that what you did wasn't for yourselves; it was for your kids and your grandkids. Re-enacting anti-scab legislation in the province of Ontario will be one of the greatest legacies we could ever create for our children or grandchildren.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I hate to be the bad-news bearer, but I'm going to be. Welcome, brothers and sisters.

I'd like to tell this exalted Legislature that I have seen many times this bill brought forward. The last time I saw it was in Ottawa when I was lobbying for the Steelworkers and Mr. Dion was the head of the Liberals. We were lobbying, trying to get this bill passed in Ottawa. The Liberals at the time came to us, met with us, socialized with us and said they'd support us. We were thrilled. We thought it was going to be national anti-scab legislation.

Well, the day of the vote came. Our Liberal friends—question mark. Not only did half of them not show up; half of them walked out with Paul Martin, a big shipbuilder owner, and the rest voted against us. They stabbed us right in the back. I watched them talking the night before; I watched them promise us that they would support us.

I'll tell you and I'll tell the people who are watching and the people in these galleries: This is only second reading. Some of the members over there may support it, and I hope they do, and I hope it passes today; hard work by my colleague from the Nickel Belt and all the other members. I hope it passes. I'll be thrilled. But I certainly won't be sold until it goes to third reading and it gets royal assent. Then it becomes law in Ontario.

Will this third reading ever see the light of day? I doubt it. Will it come before the election? I doubt it. Will it happen? I doubt it. So I'm not going to roll over and be thrilled and excited about this until I see that it passes third reading and gets royal assent and is law in Ontario, like it is in BC and Quebec.

I can tell you that my colleague from the north, Mr. Bisson, would like to say a couple of words. I'm going to sit right down now before I get really angry about this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I stand first of all as a Steelworker, second of all as a worker and third of all as a legislator to say that I support this on all fronts.

I think we understand that we need to find some way to equalize the battlefield when there are strikes. I saw what happened in Sudbury. I was on those picket lines with France and others, and we saw the division that happened in that community. I saw it in other communities across this province, and it's something that does not have to happen.

We know that at one time in this province we had anti-scab legislation. It was something that I was proud I voted for then as a member of the New Democratic government. We finally got the kind of balance and peace that we need in this province.

So I urge members of the assembly to stand up, to stand with the workers who are not only here but those across the province, to move this bill forward to second reading and to assist us in making this the law of the land yet again. I urge all members to vote for this bill because it is the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Nickel Belt has two minutes for her response.

M^me^ France Gélinas: I did listen intently to what my colleagues had to say, and I must say that my level of enthusiasm is fading quickly. I hope this bill will pass.

The arguments that were made by my Liberal colleagues—all the doubts they bring forward—are rather interesting to hear when their own Premier is on record as saying that he would not use replacement workers if there was a strike of Ontario public servants. I'm really happy that Ontario public servants will get this protection, but what about all the other people in Ontario? I mean, he seems to get it, because he says he won't use replacement workers, understanding the damage that would do to all the communities in Ontario that would be affected, but he's not willing to put meat on the bone, not willing to have action follow words. So those words ring rather empty to me right now.

The member talked about how it is not in all strikes that replacement workers are used. He's absolutely right. At OCARE we talked about classism. It is not the university professors who get to sit on the picket line and watch replacement workers go by. It's not them. It is everybody else. It is the people at ECP; it is the people who drive taxicabs in Toronto; it is the people in Nanticoke. It is an issue of class. Some don't get replacement workers, but many classes in this society do—it is so discriminatory in its nature by the way it is rolling out in

every one of our communities—which makes it even more an impetus, if we want a fair and just society, to pass the bill.

I hope I can count on your support. It needs to be debated further. That can only happen with a yes vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time allocated for this ballot item has now expired. We will vote on the member for Nickel Belt's ballot item in about 50 minutes.

IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a newly elected federal government must immediately negotiate a new Canada-Ontario immigration agreement that allows Ontario to assume control of the delivery of the programs and services to help newcomers settle and succeed, and must ensure that the agreement provides newcomers in Ontario equal treatment to those in Manitoba, Quebec and British Columbia.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Honourable members will notice that the motion just read by Mr. Dhillon is different from the motion in the notice paper, so I will reread the motion for the record and make a short comment.

"In the opinion of this House, a newly elected federal government must immediately negotiate a new Canada-Ontario immigration agreement that allows Ontario to assume control of the delivery of the programs and services to help newcomers settle and succeed, and must ensure that the agreement provides newcomers in Ontario equal treatment to those in Manitoba, Quebec and British Columbia."

I draw members' attention again to the fact that Mr. Dhillon has moved a different motion than the one printed in the order paper. Notice was waived for this ballot item, and so Mr. Dhillon is entitled to this. Though differently worded than the motion on notice, the new motion is still on the broad topic of immigration to Ontario. Copies of Mr. Dhillon's new motion are available from the table officers.

Mr. Dhillon has moved this motion. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today to speak to this very important motion. As members of this House know, in 2005 the Ontario government signed a historic immigration agreement with the federal government, known as the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, also referred to as COIA.

COIA was historic because it was Ontario's first bilateral agreement on immigration and settlement. As part of this agreement, the federal government promised to invest an additional $920 million in immigration and settlement programs in Ontario over a five-year period from 2005 to 2010. The primary objectives of the immigration agreement included:

—improved outcomes for newcomers to support successful social and economic integration,

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—increased economic benefits of immigration to address labour market needs through a provincial nominee program and temporary foreign worker agreement; and

—engaging municipalities to build partnerships and involve municipalities in immigration and integration activities related to their interests.

Ontario's first immigration agreement with Ottawa provided an infusion of new funds to help newcomers settle and learn or improve their English- or French-language skills. The first agreement was a very good start. It is now time to apply what we've learned from that experience and find new and better ways to help newcomers settle and put their skills to work quickly.

Each year our province receives over 100,000 new immigrants—almost half of all the immigrants who arrive in Canada. As the province that receives the most immigrants each year, Ontario and Canada both have a responsibility to ensure that immigrants have the resources they need to succeed. Immigrants need to have access to employment training, language training and settlement services so that they can find a good job to support their families and contribute to our economic prosperity.

Today, Quebec receives one and a half times more funding per immigrant for training and settlement than what the federal government invests in the same services in Ontario. The government of Canada currently has agreements with Manitoba, British Columbia and Quebec that allow those provinces a greater voice in the settlement of immigrants and greater control over the delivery and administration of settlement and immigration services.

What my motion calls for is simply a similar agreement in a new COIA that recognizes Ontario as a full partner on immigration. To start, Ottawa must keep its promise to Ontario's newcomers by spending the remaining $207 million promised under the first COIA, and Ottawa must reverse their $44-million funding cut to settlement services agencies.

As many of my colleagues can appreciate, settlement agencies are on the front lines every day helping our newcomers get integrated and settled quickly. This is important so that they can contribute to our shared economic prosperity.

Let me be clear: The motion on the table does not ask for a special agreement. It only asks for fairness: fairness for Ontario and fairness for our newcomers.

Last year, the Honourable Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Dr. Eric Hoskins, repeatedly called on the federal government to come to the table and negotiate a new COIA. After several months of repeated requests by Minister Hoskins, the government of Canada finally agreed to sit down and negotiate with Ontario earlier this year. Ontario came to the table in good faith with a mandate to reach an agreement that would provide services that would help newcomers succeed in Ontario; maximize the flow of funds directly into the province, reducing administrative burdens and overlaps; and ensure

that newcomers are able to contribute to a stronger economy, such as going on to start their own businesses and create more jobs.

At the negotiating table, Ontario's demand for fairness was met with inflexibility. As negotiations continued, a federal election was called, and now negotiations have paused. With a federal election under way, it is a good opportunity for all Ontarians to ask their federal candidates to treat Ontario and its newcomers fairly. It's time for Ottawa, for the next federal government, to listen to the growing calls for fairness and provide Ontario with the same kind of agreement it has with other provinces.

Ontario cannot afford to look the other way when Ottawa breaks its funding promise for our newcomers. That's because, when it comes to helping Ontarians, every penny counts and it really makes a difference. When delivering important settlement services for newcomers, Ontario needs to efficiently and effectively administer its programs. Different levels of government must not duplicate their efforts, which is how programs are delivered under the current government model. To this end, the solution to benefit our newcomers is obvious. The solution is clear: The government of Ontario should control the delivery of immigration and settlement services.

The existing patchwork of settlement and integration services in Ontario, where service delivery overlaps, is simply not the best way to serve new immigrants. Language training, for example, may have different rules, depending on whether funding comes from the federal government or the Ontario government. For newcomers trying to access these services, this makes no sense whatsoever and can be a deeply frustrating experience. The duplication in funding and the administrative complexity serve no one, whether funder, service provider or new immigrant.

As I've said before, this is not an innovative new approach; it's been done before. It's been done in Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba, and it should be done in Ontario, where most of Canada's newcomers make their home.

A new immigration agreement would mean innovative services focused on newcomers that are easy to access and produce quicker results for newcomers, services that are more responsive to changing local needs and that are easily coordinated with other provincial programs that directly affect newcomers' success—programs like educational and skills training, employment counselling and many others.

A single immigration system for our province would result in better use of resources and better access for immigrants to the services they need to begin fulfilling their dreams and contributing to our economy. It would mean enhanced access and enhanced results for newcomers in my riding of Brampton West and across Ontario. Ultimately, it would mean a stronger, more prosperous, more vibrant economy for all Ontarians.

The McGuinty government understands that immigration is key to our economy. We understand that immigration is significant because our newcomers will drive our labour force growth and our economy. In fact, within this decade, Ontario's net labour force growth will be driven completely by new immigrants. They will be our engineers, lawyers, IT specialists and other highly skilled and highly educated professionals. That's because our demographics are changing. People are having fewer children, and the baby boomers who make up a large portion of our workforce are retiring. As Minister Hoskins has said—and it's worth repeating—immigration is Ontario's lifeblood. It's our demographic future and the fuel of our economic engine.

Under the first COIA, Ontario's newcomers benefited from the federal government agreement. The agreement helped support the successful social and economic integration of newcomers. While the first COIA succeeded in bringing about some improvements for newcomers, we expect the federal government to continue to work with us. The government of Ontario wants what is best for our newcomers. We want them to thrive and prosper. That means Ontario's newcomers need a new immigration agreement similar to what Ottawa has with Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba: a new immigration system, a new partnership that helps all immigrants access the services they need, when they need them, to ease the transition to their new home.

We urgently need a new Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, and we need it now. As Ontario turns the corner to a better tomorrow, our newcomers are an important part of our economic success.

I ask all members of this Legislature to support my motion that calls on the next federal government to treat Ontario's newcomers fairly by negotiating a new COIA where Ontario can control the delivery of important newcomer services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: As the PC Party's critic for citizenship and immigration, I'm pleased to respond to the comments of the member for Brampton West, MPP Vic Dhillon, today. I want to start by saying that I'm sure everyone in this House wants to ensure that newcomers to the province of Ontario have the best chance to succeed, so I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to the member's motion.

Immigrants take a great risk when they make that huge decision to leave life as they know it in their country of birth to pursue the opportunities for a better future for themselves and their families here in Canada. We owe it to those risk-takers, those new Canadians, who need a kind of settlement program that will give them the chance to make a contribution to the cultural and economic vibrancy of Ontario.

1530

I certainly support the spirit of the member's motion that we're debating today. I think it's also important that we talk about some of the things that were perhaps conveniently not mentioned in his remarks, and that is the reason that the government of Canada has made the

decision to direct a portion of funding for settlement programs to other provinces. I think we need to look at the facts. The facts tell us that under Premier McGuinty's government, immigrants to Canada are increasingly choosing to reside in provinces other than Ontario.

Here's the reality: Since 2005, Ontario's share of immigrants settling in this country has decreased by 21%. Back in 2005, 54% of newcomers to this country circled Ontario on the map as their province of choice. It's the place the majority of Canadians wanted to call home. Last year, that number plummeted to 42%. I hope the member heard those statistics and I hope he remembers them when he stands up and claims Ontario is being treated unfairly. The reality of the situation is that in 2010-11, Ontario received $3,500 per immigrant while other provinces, on average, received $2,900. The reason total federal settlement funding for Ontario is declining in the coming year is simple: Under the McGuinty government, fewer immigrants are coming to this province.

These new Canadians know what so many of us in Ontario already know: After seven years—almost eight—of this government's tax and spend ways, we've become a have-not province. Our debt has soared, taxes are up, hydro rates are through the roof and jobs are hard to keep and even harder to find. That's not the kind of environment immigrants are looking for when they're deciding where in Canada they'll settle. They want to bring their skills to a province where their hard work will be rewarded, not gobbled up in taxes by a government that's hard-wired to spend it. We talk a lot in this place about the signs that this tired government opposite has grown out of touch and out of gas, but I think the statistics that I talked about are no greater condemnation of Premier McGuinty's record than to repeat those immigrant settlement numbers: 52% came here in 2005; 42% did so last year.

It's embarrassing to say that immigrants think Ontario, under this Premier, is a bad risk. That's a shameful state of affairs. We need to turn those numbers around. We need to create an economic environment in Ontario that makes us the engine of Canada's economy, as we once were. Of course, we know this government has no idea how to accomplish that, how to clean up the mess it created. It has proved it in this week's budget.

So what do we do? What do they do? They blame the fact that immigrants are bypassing Ontario on someone else—in this case, the federal government. The member for Brampton West stands up with his motion, which basically calls on the federal government to give us more money. What his motion doesn't do is tell us how they plan to spend it. They won't say what safeguards will be put in place to ensure that these settlement programs don't turn into the latest Liberal boondoggle.

We've been down this road too many times with this government. We all know that words like "accountability" don't exist on that side of the House. I'll remind the member opposite of slushgate, which I think we all talked about, where the previous minister was forced to resign by wasting $32 million on a program that awarded money based on who the applicants knew within the Liberal Party. It's also important to mention the Auditor General's comments about the oversight on that program, which he called "the worst that I've ever seen."

I ask the member for Brampton West to keep that in mind when he points the finger at Ottawa and anywhere else. Of course, Ontario deserves—it deserves—equal treatment to ensure that our settlement programs can effectively support their integration into our communities, but I should tell him, and I would like to tell his caucus colleague, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to follow the lead of Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak, who has called on the government to design a settlement program that is fully costed and contains accountability and performance measures.

You have to have those accountabilities in place. You can't just ask for a blank cheque. No responsible federal government, no matter what political stripe, is going to negotiate an agreement and hand over hundreds of millions of dollars with no plan to show how it's going to be spent and how it's even working. Sadly, that kind of accountability and respect for taxpayer dollars isn't on this government's watch. I know that our leader, Tim Hudak, has talked about accountability—it's going to be a fundamental principle—and I think that when it comes to settlement programs, we have to provide that accountability. Again, we can't just ask for a blank cheque.

I also want to mention our leader's Newcomers Employment Opportunities Act, 2010, which will provide incentives for immigrant small business entrepreneurs to invest in Ontario. The bill will help new Ontarians cut through the red tape and encourage them to establish businesses and create jobs. It will assist newcomers to this province who work hard and play by the rules, and it's the kind of environment for new investment that I think we need.

In closing, I want to tell the House about a situation that happened in my own riding just this week. It's a sad case, and I couldn't believe it when I was given the details. Last summer, officials from the city of Brockville were among a group of leaders from my riding who travelled to China as part of an economic trade mission. One of the contacts that they made overseas has since followed up with city officials, and they planned to invest $4 million in Brockville to start up a manufacturing facility that they hoped would employ 31 people. An agent acting for these investors contacted the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration about the provincial nominee program, to start the process to bring this important investment in my riding. It should have been a slam dunk. Instead, here's what they were told by a ministry official: "Don't go to Brockville. Don't invest your money in that part of the province because some of the factories have been closed." This manager said that they were unaware of any competitive advantages that Brockville has to offer. They were told, "It's only suitable for tourism." Rather than come to Brockville, they were encouraged to make their investment in Hamilton, which is unbelievable. Officials from my riding

travelled halfway around the world to make these important contacts. Just as they were about to see an investment come back, your government steps in, shoves the city aside and tries to direct the money elsewhere. I have to ask you: Whose side are you guys on? It's little wonder that the economic development director for the city told my office that he's furious about what happened, and I am too. It may come as a surprise to someone working at a ministry office here in Toronto that there's life in Ontario beyond the city's boundaries. They should take a drive and experience it sometime.

Yes, it's true that, thanks to this government and its policies, Brockville's manufacturing sector has seen some unfortunate job losses, but they're still home to some major international companies like Proctor and Gamble, 3M and Shell. Surely it's not too much to ask, by local officials in my riding, to expect the Ontario government to know this. Even if they can't offer any help, they at least shouldn't try to scuttle any deals.

What makes the situation even more ridiculous is that at the same time one government ministry is actively trying to keep newcomers out of Brockville, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is operating a pilot project designed to attract immigrants to come to our area. It's a classic example that on that side of the House, one hand doesn't know what the other is doing.

So there's just an example from this week, in my own riding, when this particular government and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration can't run their own provincial nominee program. We need accountability.

I support his motion, but I think we have to have those checks and balances so that we're not just asking for a blank cheque.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very happy to rise in my place today to talk about an issue that, as a northern member, maybe many people in the province wouldn't associate our having an interest in. As you know, we just announced a northern Ontario growth plan, and one of the reasons for doing that is to attempt to revitalize the northern Ontario economy. Right now, we actually have revitalization taking place in many of the resource industries, especially gold, and we're having new allocations of wood happening up in the north that provide new opportunities to create new forest products. We have a very low cost of living up there in regard to living because we have a housing stock that's already there and we have infrastructure in our towns that needs people.

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We'd like to have more control in Ontario so that we could work and attract potential immigration that could come into northern Ontario. This would really help us revitalize our economy and provide incredible entrepreneurial opportunities for people from all around the world to come north and take advantage of some of the booms that are happening right now.

In two areas of my riding gold mines, in particular, are being revitalized, and some are being started up anew for the first time. This is creating jobs in the construction phase and in the mining phase, but also all the suppliers that are required, as mining has some of the greatest spin-off of any economic activity—some economists would say, up to five jobs for every one mining job created.

So there's incredible opportunity, and we're seeing people coming up now and starting to manufacture some of the equipment that is being needed in the mining industry. We're very pleased about that. That's the type of thing we want to be able to offer, if we could have more control of immigration policy for our province.

I think it's important to note that we're 40% of the economy of this country, and that's a dynamic part of this economy. While we've had some setbacks with the great recession that happened a couple of years ago, we've now recovered 91% of our jobs. The United States, on the other hand, has only recovered 15% of their jobs. So we're making a good effort here to rebuild this economy better than anybody else in North America, for sure.

We need immigrants to come into Ontario, to take advantage of the opportunities that we have here, to bring in the skills and entrepreneurial spirit that they can offer this particular economy. We need that agreement with the federal government. We need to have more control, so that we can work with immigrants that come into Ontario and provide, specifically, the skills that they need to be able to fit into Ontario society.

I'm very pleased to be able to stand in my place and support my colleague's bill today. I hope that the other members of the House would feel fit to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did want to make it back here because I just want to start by saying that our member from Leeds–Grenville has a very distinct and informed opinion on the role of new Canadians. He speaks often and frequently about how important it is to the Canadian economy, but more importantly, to the Ontario economy. I think what he tries to establish, generally, is that it comes down to the issue of fairness.

This motion, the way it was crafted initially—I couldn't speak to the way it was crafted—was sort of out of order. The initial version of this particular motion could have been challenged in terms of the fact that your government has dealt with legislation on this and the minister has agreed to do something about it.

Now, if you look at the fine wording of it, it tends to blame the federal government. That's kind of the pushback on this thing; it's blaming the federal government.

Mr. Dhillon, I respect the work you do in your community. You're right. We all here, I believe, support the importance of new Canadians, people coming to Canada, the innovative people, the people that take the risks to come here and contribute to the country. What they need is opportunities to be able to contribute, to work, raise their family and have pride in community, which in most cases—90%—they do.

The fundamental thing here is that the motion requests funds from the prospective government of Canada that

were recently allocated to other provinces, due to dwindling numbers and new immigration that wanted to settle in Ontario.

Our member from Leeds–Grenville tried to establish the reasons people are choosing other destinations like Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has the highest GDP per population of all of Canada. It's a very large province with a very small population: lots of room to grow, lots of opportunity.

We are elected to represent Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Your time has expired.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): You'll have to negotiate that with somebody else.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to speak about this motion, as I did to the motion that was put forward by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration several months ago. In reality, the motion that was put in by my honourable friend was an identical motion, which caused some form of confusion, hence the Speaker needing to start the debate off by reading it again. There was, in fact, a one-word change in order to allow this motion to proceed again today, because this Legislature has already debated the exact same thing, save and except we're now asking a future government to do something; the last time, we asked the incumbent government to do it. But the rest of the wording is identical. This Legislature has already voted unanimously to do this, but nothing has happened. Why? Why has nothing happened? That's because this motion is making the exact same errors as the motion before.

When I stood here before with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, as I'm going to say to the honourable member today—this motion, and I quote in part, "allows Ontario to assume control of the delivery of programs and services."

The province has had this authority enshrined in legislation since it received royal assent in Britain on March 29, 1867. Since 1867, this province has been singularly able to assume control of the delivery of programs and services related to immigrants and, in all that time, has chosen not to do so.

To be clear, section 91 of the British North America Act, which received royal assent 144 years and two days ago, says that section 91 is all of the federal powers. Section 92 gives all of the provincial powers, and section 93 gives joint jurisdictional powers in two areas. One is agricultural, and one is immigration. In all of those 144 years, the governments of this province have never done what they can do and what they should be doing, even as this motion is being debated.

In 1978, the government of Quebec did right by all of its immigrants, its newcomers, the people who aspired to live in that province, the people who needed help in settlement arrangements or the people, most importantly, who needed to have their diplomas and the like ascertained for the equivalency of Quebec law. In 1978, the province of Quebec unilaterally passed their own act, which is still extant. It's still in effect; it still works.

The act is entitled, and I have it here, An Act respecting immigration to Québec. It's a pretty simple document—it's a few pages long—but within the four walls of that legislation, the government of Quebec can select its own immigrants. The government of Quebec can set the selection criteria for how those immigrants are chosen, so that they can choose entrepreneurs, tradespeople, professors, nuclear scientists, janitors or anyone else that they need to help the province of Quebec. They have the laws to fully integrate their citizens, something that this is trying to do here today, I guess. They have the right to investigate fraud, under the immigration act of Quebec, if people are getting their papers illegally, wrongfully or without due intent to practise what they promised to do. They also have penal provisions set out within the act.

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This government can do any of those things. I have said this since I have been in this Legislature, to Conservatives when I sat on the government side, and I don't know how many times to Liberals every time this issue comes up. This is what can be done. I know of what I speak. I worked in the immigration department for 21 years. I worked in the national headquarters. I was responsible, in part, for the Quebec act. This province can do it today. We don't need this motion. We need will on the government's side to do exactly what Quebec did all those years ago. We can do wonderful things in terms of our immigration, but we have to have the guts to do it, the wherewithal and the money to spend.

The second part of this says, to "ensure that the agreement provides newcomers in Ontario equal treatment to those in Manitoba, Quebec and British Columbia." I would be the first to say that if this government doesn't want to do what Quebec did, if this government simply wants to let the Canadian government do whatever they do under their immigration program and we accept whatever immigrants decide that they eventually want to settle here—and the member from Leeds–Grenville is absolutely right: The numbers in terms of immigration to the province of Ontario have declined each and every year since 2005.

There is a reason for that. Part of the reason is that our economy has not been as robust as what it was in the past, but secondly, there are increasing opportunities for people elsewhere in this country, increasing opportunities for francophones because of the 1978 law in Quebec and increasing opportunities with the boom in western Canada, particularly as relates to energy production. People are continuing and are seeing more and more of our immigrants go to British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and, to a lesser extent, Manitoba and Quebec. Our numbers are declining. We cannot expect to get the same amount of money today that we could have expected back in 2005.

But I don't have a problem with those portions about getting equality with Manitoba and BC—except that both

of those provinces do a whole lot more than this province is promising to do for its new and recent immigrant population. How can we expect to get the same money and provide the same services as Quebec? It's the thing that I don't understand in this whole resolution. Quebec has spent money since 1978 hiring immigration officers to work within the body of Quebec. Has Ontario? Ontario used to have immigration settlement officers when I joined the immigration department in 1973. They were at the airport. There was a thing called Welcome House on University Avenue. It was closed down in the 1970s and never reopened again. Quebec has that; we don't have that. How can we expect the same amount of money when we won't do that?

Quebec has visa officers that are posted in every francophone country from whence new citizens, new immigrants are coming. Are we going to do that? Are we asking for the same amount of money so that we can do that? I don't think so. I don't see how we can get the same amount of money unless we're going to provide the same service.

They have integration personnel who work with new immigrants, even before immigrants are given their visa. They work with them in order to ascertain what kind of education they have and do the Quebec equivalent, so that when an immigrant gets on the plane, say perhaps from Côte D'Ivoire, and they have an engineering certificate, they already know, when they get off, the equivalent in terms of Quebec. They already know whether they can start working as an engineer the next morning. Does Ontario want to do that? Ontario should do that, but you're not asking for that. You're just asking for some more money, so I don't see how you can expect, or anyone can expect, that we get the same kind of privileges or the same kind of money out of the federal government.

They have an investigations unit and they pay for that too, in case people rip off the system, and heaven knows that some people are wont to rip off this system here in Canada, I have to tell you. I've seen it myself.

Those are all costs that the Quebec government has spent for 32 years. They have spent this money and developed an immigration system of which we would be equally proud, if we had the gumption to go out and do it ourselves.

I posed the same question to the minister, and I posed the same question to the previous finance minister when the Liberals were first elected in 2003, and he came before this House with the selfsame thing.

I do not believe that there can be equality of Ontario with the other provinces unless we provide equal service. Is this government finally saying they want to provide the equality of service that people get in Manitoba, that people get in British Columbia, which have invested far more from their provinces in the integration of new immigrants? Is that what you're going to do? If that's what this government's going to do, I'm all for it, and I think the federal government may be more than willing to talk to this government, talk to the Liberals and say, "All right. You want to provide the same kind of services that are being provided in Manitoba and British Columbia? Then we will sit down and talk about getting the same amount of money."

Or conversely, if this government chooses to set up an immigration bill for Ontario, just like Quebec did in 1978, and set up all of those things that they do, like selecting immigrants, selection criteria to choose who we want, integration of new immigrants, investigations, penal provisions and everything else that is contained within the body of that act, then I would suggest that the federal government will give Ontario—or it doesn't even have to give; we can do it unilaterally. Nobody is going to complain if Ontario wants to go down the selfsame road as Quebec has done so successfully for all of those 32 years.

People deserve a better immigration system, coming to this province. When will this government produce it? It's not just enough to ask for the money; it's to set out a program where new immigrants, who come to this land with a gleam in their eye and hope for their children, have an opportunity to fully integrate. It's not just how much money we get per capita; it is a government that is committed to doing all of the things that are necessary to provide that, just like is being done in Manitoba, just like is being done in British Columbia, and certainly which is done on a sterling level in Quebec for the last 32 years. When is this government going to do the same thing?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to join the debate this afternoon on the motion on immigration services.

I must say, I was quite offended by the remarks from the member from Leeds–Grenville, who was treating immigration services as if they were some sort of Liberal scam. I found that quite offensive, when I think about my own local immigrant services agency.

When I was first elected in 2003, the immigration services in Guelph were quite inadequate, and I'm not blaming that on any party here; it was just a fact of life. They were. But the local community worked together very hard—worked with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, worked with the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration—to totally reform what was happening in Guelph. That included a lot of leadership from the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, because they recognized the economic importance to the community of making sure that we improved the settlement services and got people involved in the community.

There was a new board. There was a new CEO. There was a new governance structure. And out of that came Guelph immigrant services. They restructured so that they qualified for a lot of additional government grants. What has come out of that is vastly improved settlement services for the newcomers in Guelph. And then what happened? In December, they got a letter from the federal government saying, "You're going to lose your new grant funding again," because the feds just decided they were going to pull some of the funding.

So I think it's important for us to look at this Canada-Ontario immigration agreement which was signed by the province and the federal government in November 2005. It's a five-year agreement. When it came toward the end, it was clear that it wasn't going to be renegotiated in any sort of a timely way. So there was an agreement to extend the agreement for about a year, until April 2011, and the agreement that we have expires today. The end of that agreement is today.

1600

What we're asking for is simply that we have a new agreement which reaches the needs of Ontario, but I think it's also important to note the behaviour of the federal government. Part of that agreement was to provide new funds for immigrant services in Ontario of $920 million over the five years of that original agreement, and I want to tell you what happened.

In 2005-06, the federal government failed to provide $46.8 million. In 2006-07, they failed to provide $53.7 million. In 2007-08, they failed to provide $52 million. In 2008-09, they failed to provide $40.5 million. In 2009-10, they failed to provide to Ontario immigrant settlement services $14.4 million. That's over $200 million of the money that was in that five-year-old agreement which never flowed out of a $920-million agreement. Of course they don't want to renew the agreement. They don't want to spend the money on settlement services in Ontario, and we think that is wrong. We think we should all be supporting immigrant settlement services in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to thank the member from Brampton West for bringing this motion to the table. Quite frankly—I want to be very clear—not only am I going to support it, but I'm going to explain very clearly that it's an ask for negotiation. Some of the members are a little bit anxious about exactly what the details are, but that's inside of a negotiation.

I want to thank the member for simply saying that the provincial government, which, as of today, will no longer have that agreement in place, is asking for the new government—no political stripe—to negotiate. Let's get those negotiations going. They spend almost a billion dollars across the nation on immigrant settlement, and we don't have a piece of that pie. I'm just suggesting that the member is trying to bring it to the attention of Ontario and Ontarians to provide us with some of that money to do that.

I'm not going to argue with the member from Beaches–East York because, quite frankly, historically—and I defer to his expertise, obviously—every province can do it alone, but that's an awful lot of money that we're going to simply say, because we can do it alone—we're strapped for cash, and they're already spending $1 billion—let's not go after a piece of that.

I think it's a good idea to make a motion from this Legislature that we think it would be nice for us to get a piece of that action. It's $1 billion that they're going to spend across the nation, and if Ontario doesn't get any of it—why wouldn't we want to sit down and ask them to do that?

If the member from Leeds–Grenville says that he's going to support the motion, I would hate to hear what he would say if he didn't support the motion. I don't think he talked very much about the concepts. I appreciate that the member from Beaches–East York talked about the various reasons why immigration is happening, but we're still talking about over 100,000 immigrants who come to Ontario out of the two hundred and some odd thousand who come from around the world, give or take—I'm just basically saying. Now we're saying, because the numbers have gone down a little bit and other reasons for them to move, that we shouldn't be looking for a piece of that action—it doesn't make sense to me.

Why I'm supporting the motion from the member from Brampton West is simply because in terms of his experience and his knowledge of the immigrant settlement concepts within his own riding and what he's seen around him, it makes sense.

I want to talk for a couple of seconds about the immigrant settlement offices in the riding of Brant. I was born and raised in Brantford. I know from many, many years ago what Brantford looked like and what it consisted of in terms of immigration. I can honestly tell you that, right now, the statistics are impressive. We've got about 120 different countries that we now know we've settled in our region—120 different countries speaking about 95 different languages. Holy mackerel, what a cosmopolitan picture from what it used to be when I was a kid. We were shocked and staggered by the fact that we saw black people: Talk about a homogenized community for the longest time, when I was a kid.

Quite frankly, it became more evident that people wanted to settle here. The settlement services people provide such a stellar supervision of getting funds to help them settle and to become quicker contributors to the community.

What the member is asking us to do, if we listen carefully, is to negotiate a new Canada-Ontario immigration agreement that allows Ontario to assume control of the delivery of the programs that they're paying for and to have some type of control of how we use that, just like we do with Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba. I don't see that that's a bad thing, and I don't see that as legislators, we shouldn't be standing up and simply saying, "You know what? That's not a bad idea."

The agreement is finished today. As of today, the federal government needs some encouragement to get back to the table and let us get a piece of that almost $1 billion that's being distributed around the nation that we're paying for, as an Ontario taxpayer, to the national government. Let's get a piece of that action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Brampton West has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like to thank the members from Leeds–Grenville, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Durham, Beaches–East York, Guelph and Brant.

As we learned in this week's budget, we've regained 91% of all the jobs that were lost in the recent recession. In the US, only 15% of the jobs have come back. The majority of the jobs that we gained in Ontario were the well-paid type, which is very good news. This is the most prime or most opportune time for the new government that will be elected federally to provide Ontario its fair share of funds with respect to settlement agencies, settlement services and training for new immigrants. This is a huge concern to me in my riding, as a good share of the new immigrants that do come to Ontario settle in Brampton West, in Brampton–Springdale and in Mississauga South. I want them to come and be trained and be contributing members of our society so they can pay taxes and so we can have better hospitals, better roads.

The point was mentioned that new immigrants are moving to other provinces. Yes, that is the case. You know, the good news is that they move to new provinces—they come in to new provinces but they don't settle in Manitoba or Saskatchewan; they come to Ontario because of the great programs we have. I think we can do a better job with more money from the federal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired. It's time to vote.

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 73, standing in the name of Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Ouellette has moved second reading of Bill 86, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I would recommend that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the standing committee? Agreed. So ordered.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 74. Madame Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 45, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after the next vote.

IMMIGRANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 75, standing in the name of Mr. Dhillon: Mr. Dhillon's motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1610 to 1615.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Madame Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 45. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Marchese, Rosario	Ruprecht, Tony
DiNovo, Cheri	Mauro, Bill	Tabuns, Peter
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	
Horwath, Andrea	Orazietti, David	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Dickson, Joe	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Best, Margarett	Kular, Kuldip	Smith, Monique
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte	Sorbara, Greg
Chudleigh, Ted	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Delaney, Bob	O'Toole, John	
Dhillon, Vic	Pendergast, Leeanna	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 16; the nays are 28.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order.

The minister without portfolio.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1619.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	

STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Peter Fonseca
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
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Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Donna H. Cansfield, Aileen Carroll, P.C.
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Jim Wilson
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Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Steve Clark
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, Aileen Carroll, P.C.
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
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Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group / Comité spécial sur la transaction proposée entre le Groupe TMX et le London Stock Exchange Group

Chair / Président: Gerry Phillips
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Frank Klees
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
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